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Brian Williams

Anarchism and Social Revolution

An Anarchist Politics of the Transitionary State

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To Renee, for keeping me company at this moment of mankind's middle age.

Preface

This Book's Purpose

Transformative Goals

How can societies maximize freedom and equality (or equal liberty, more tersely) in the context of the modern sovereign state system? This is the central research question motivating this book. This question, perhaps because it is so basic, has been obscured, it seems, by a welter of intriguing but more-or-less desultory queries regarding various aspects of our individual and political lives. However, the current historical moment calls for revisiting the basic question, and refreshing our shared sense of purpose and direction. The malaise and morbid symptoms of the current historical moment reflect our failure thus far to do so.

As this book's title suggests, its argument focuses on the topic of *anarchism* – the social movement which aims to maximize equal liberty – as well as *social revolution* which, it will be argued, is needed to advance the cause of equal liberty beyond the current state of affairs. The sub-title of the book was inspired by John Clark's recognition, in his book *Between Earth and Empire*, of the "need for an anarchist politics of the transitional state" – something I seek to provide with this book. Like Murray Bookchin's book *The Ecology of Freedom*, which he describes as having an "unabashed messianic character," this book is highly ambitious. Specifically, this book contributes to transformative change in four domains:

1. *Anarchist philosophy* – this book's new perspective on anarchism has the potential to enhance anarchism's popularity, rendering it suitable as a new cultural paradigm by clarifying its often murky relationship with mainstream political participation, and more adequately addressing concerns about bad anarchy.
2. *Cultural paradigm shift* – the book advances a new paradigm – libertarian social democracy – with a vision and level of ambition proportional to the demands of the current historical moment. Such bold ideas are needed to overcome the

current crises of neoliberalism and liberal democracy, and to continue the historical march toward equal liberty.
3. *US politics* – the book presents a rigorous argument for social revolution in the United States, which will be needed to fully address its own contemporary policy problems and to catalyze a broader paradigm shift, potentially reviving the view of the United States as a city upon a hill (to borrow Winthrop's phrase).
4. *Interdisciplinarity* – as a byproduct of these goals, the book also promotes a new interdisciplinarity between anarchism and comparative politics conducive to breakthroughs in both fields: a new normative sense of direction for political scientists beyond liberal democracy, and an enhanced anarchist understanding about how institutional choices can affect anarchist progress.

A New Perspective on Anarchism

A key development in this book's argument was learning about prefigurative principle and its centrality to anarchism. As some readers may be aware, the prefigurative principle (as applied to anarchism) emphasizes the need to incorporate the anarchist goal of non-domination into everyday praxis and life, thereby increasingly realizing the anarchist goal of freedom and equality (or equal liberty) in the here-and-now, rather than waiting for one big revolutionary event in the by-and-by.

One of the basic implications of prefigurative strategy is a more-or-less strict prohibition on the use of state power as an instrument for anarchist progress. Thus, learning about prefigurative anarchism brought into relief how the gradualist perspective presented in this book contrasted with the traditional anarchist view that states are more-or-less incapable of facilitating a transition to a free and equal society. Indeed, even liberal democratic states may help to stabilize upper-class rule, and thus make equal liberty more difficult to achieve.

There are two central arguments made in this book that go against conventional anarchist thinking, but also connect anarchism to comparative politics (as explained in Chap. 1). First, state-based institutions can potentially be more conducive to equal liberty maximization than the decentralized or non-state counterfactual. Second, some (state-based) political institutions are more conducive to anarchist progress than others. This book's argument assumes that state-based political institutions can be used consciously (i.e., through direct involvement) to promote equal liberty (understood as anarchism's central aim), but only after a successful social revolution in the political, economic, and cultural realms (where needed to maximize equal liberty).

Revolution in the United States

In addition to its contribution to political philosophy, this book also seeks to promote actual change in the real world. In other words, this book engages with both theory (Part I) and praxis (Part II). With regard to the latter objective, the book focuses primarily on the United States, for a few reasons. First, as the most powerful country in the world, transformative change within the United States is essential not only to its own domestic policy reforms, but also broader changes at the international level. Also, as a lifelong US citizen, I am in a better position to analyze social affairs in the United States.

Over the course of this book's development, conditions in the United States have become increasingly ripe for its revolutionary argument: a long list of deeply rooted policy problems, the failure of the two-party system to adequately address the major issues, popular support for transformative change, and crises associated with the contemporary neoliberal and liberal democratic paradigms. While the broader objectives advocated in this book – anarchism and social revolution – may strike some as too radical, it will be argued that the current historical moment calls for transformative changes of this magnitude, rather than reformist politics-as-usual.

One advantage of focusing on transformative change is that it shifts the reader's attention away from politics-as-usual in the United States, and toward the larger historical context. Contemporary US politics seem characterized by a combination of right-wing distortions (lies, half-truths, spin, etc.) and threats to our basic rights, as well as a liberal preoccupation with reformism and attempts to counter those distortions and threats, thus allowing the right wing to control the agenda. As Hacker and Pierson observed during the Trump presidency, "Almost everything we read today is about [president Trump] and his outrages." This book transcends this depressing and futile situation, refocusing our attention on the bigger picture and charting a path toward real solutions to today's social problems.

Argument Characteristics

Primarily a Work in Political Philosophy

Overall, this book could more accurately be characterized as a work in political philosophy than a work in political theory. By *political philosophy* I mean, basically, rigorous normative argumentation regarding social affairs. In a similar vein, Leo Strauss, in his 1957 article "What is Political Philosophy?," described political philosophy as the pursuit of knowledge about the good life and good society. By contrast, *political theory* is sometimes understood as exegesis, or the development and application of methodological approaches to the interpretation of canonical texts (see, for example, Chapter 4 of John Gunnell's 1979 book *Political Theory: Tradition and Interpretation*). Of course, these two approaches are not mutually

exclusive: political philosophy often involves the interpretation of canonical texts, and authors focusing on the interpretation of canonical texts often seek to advance their own normative arguments.

In line with political theory's emphasis on interpretation, this book's argument aims to build upon existing works from several fields, especially anarchist philosophy and political science. In that sense, the argument reflects what Raekstad and Gradin refer to as *rational reconstruction*, according to which they "take an ongoing body of ideas and practices as our point of departure" and then aim to "make sense of the large, and at times complicated literature" on the topic. However, while I have sought to incorporate and build on the relevant existing theory, my own argument has remained "behind the wheel" of this book throughout its evolution (consistent with the practice of political philosophy, as described above).

Rationalist and Constructivist Methodologies

Just as one can find aspects of both political theory and political philosophy in this book's argument, so too can one find elements of both rationalist and constructivist methodologies. *Rationalism*, or rational choice theory, is positivist in nature. At the individual level, it emphasizes the goal of utility maximization (via cost/benefit analyses), processes of strategic interaction, as well as collective action problems. This book reflects a rationalist outlook in its recognition of collective action problems arising over public goods provision as well as revolutionary strategy.

In contrast to the rationalist emphasis on individual self-interest and strategic interaction, *constructivism* focuses primarily on the power of ideas as well as the historical dialectical process unfolding at the structural level. While rationalist methods (including rational choice theory) focus on individual's self-interests and remain normatively neutral, constructivist methodology, as I understand it, involves analyzing as well as promoting historical progress. From the perspective of libertarian social democracy – the central idea advanced in this book – history tends toward equal liberty maximization, although such developments depend crucially on individual choices.

A Weakly Deterministic Philosophy of History

As will be discussed further in the introductory chapter, the philosophy of history underpinning this book's methodology can be described as *weakly deterministic*. That term is adopted from Fukuyama's 1992 book *The End of History and the Last Man*, where it was used to emphasize the importance of both structural or macro-level developments [constructivism], as well as individual choice and agency [rationalism] in shaping the actual course of history.

With regard to modern historical developments, one can identify dialectical processes (thesis-antithesis-synthesis) roughly corresponding to this book's argument in the three primary realms of social life. In the political realm, this is reflected in the historical progression from the modern sovereign state, to classical anarchism, to the democratic transitionary state. In the economic realm, this is reflected in the progression from capitalism, to socialism, to the libertarian mixed economy. In the cultural realm, this is reflected in the transition from absolutism, to classical liberalism, to libertarian social democracy.

In *The Ecology of Freedom*, Bookchin emphasizes that the goal of philosopher Georg Hegel's dialectics is to comprehend "the whole" or totality, rather than the methodological process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis itself. According to this book's argument, historical developments within each of the three aforementioned realms converge into the larger social system which I will refer to as libertarian social democracy. That is, libertarian social democracy is the paradigmatic idea which subsumes more specific developments in the political, economic, and cultural realms. I also make use of the Hegelian term *summum bonum* a few times in the book, in reference to equal liberty maximization as a historical destination and teleological end-point.

Referencing and Citation Style

Many publications were reviewed over the course of this book's development, and it relies heavily on substantiating quotes and references from a variety of sources. There are a few advantages to this approach. First, conducting an extensive literature review allows one to "stand on the shoulders of giants" (Isaac Newton's expression) and, relatedly, to avoid "reinventing the wheel" with regard to the ideas expressed. Second, conducting a thorough literature review mitigates the challenge of presenting a radical argument while still being viewed as an adult in the room, by raising awareness of potential pitfalls, nuance, and counterarguments. A third benefit is more diffuse: a thorough literature review is more likely to alert readers to useful sources on topics of interest, facilitating stronger contributions to theory building.

Despite the large number of publications reviewed, given the broad nature of this book's central topics (anarchism and social revolution) and the vast amount of relevant scholarship on those and more specific subsumed topics, some relevant works will not be reviewed in time for this book's publication. Consequently, some worthy publications will remain unengaged, and some important theoretical nuance possibly overlooked.

With regard to the many references included, scholarly publications (books and peer-reviewed journal articles) are cited parenthetically within the text followed by a full works cited section at the end of each chapter. Brackets are occasionally added within parenthetical citations to indicate the original publication year of an older work, and within quotes to distinguish my own words from those drawn directly

from the source. All online sources (op-eds, news briefs, reports, and some articles) are fully cited in footnotes rather than the list of works cited (Chap. 6 especially relies on many online sources). Most of the online sources cited are either politically neutral mainstream news sources such as the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Pew Research Center, or news updates from left-of-center sources such as *Democracy Now*. There are also some references to conservative online sources such as the *New York Post*, although these are fewer in number.

Roadmap

Part I of this book presents a vision of anarchism and is separated into four chapters. Chapter 1 sketches out a historical context, provides an overview of the book's argument, and describes the potential interdisciplinarity between anarchism and comparative politics. That is followed by chapters focusing on anarchism in the political (Chap. 2), economic (Chap. 3), and cultural realms (Chap. 4). Part II focuses on social revolution, especially in the United States. Chapter 5 lays out an elite-class theoretic alternative to the pluralist paradigm, thus providing a foundation for Chaps. 6, 7, and 8. Chapter 6 aims to demonstrate the moral justification for revolutionary (as opposed to reformist) change. Chapter 7 discusses revolutionary objectives in the political, economic, and cultural realms. Chapter 8 presents an argument for revolutionary as opposed to a reformist or hybrid strategy. The concluding chapter summarizes key aspects of the book's argument and contribution.

Acknowledgments

This book has taken several years to complete. I began developing it in the late 2016 while a post-doctoral researcher at the University of West Florida in Pensacola. The book expands on two articles which themselves developed over the course of several years. Those articles, which I began while a doctoral student at the University of California, Riverside, focused separately on the topics of social revolution and anarchism, and were eventually published in the journal *Theory in Action* in 2016 and 2018, respectively.

Along the way, there have been several individuals whose help, whether direct or indirect, contributed to the gradual development of this book and should therefore be acknowledged. While an undergraduate at California State University in San Marcos (CSUSM) in 2006, visiting professor Anthony O'Halloran introduced me to the Good Friday Agreement in his class on the politics of Northern Ireland, and thus sparked my interest in comparative politics and, more specifically, the fascinatingly paradoxical idea that proportional representation (and a multi-party system) can help to promote legislative consensus building. Meanwhile, Dr. Cyrus Masroori, professor of political science at CSUSM, introduced me to anarchist philosophy by

assigning Mikhail Bakunin's *God and the State* in one of his political theory courses I'd taken.

At the University of California in Riverside (UCR), where I eventually acquired my PhD in political science in 2014, Professor John Laursen provided useful comments on one of my aforementioned *Theory in Action* articles titled "States as Instruments of Anarchism," and assigned it as a reading in his graduate seminar on anarchism during the Spring 2016 semester. I also appreciate insightful feedback on an early version of that paper from my acquaintances Matthew Snyder and Brian Kim while attending UCR. Thanks are also owed to another acquaintance Dan Mages for allowing me to present an early version of my article on social revolution in his class at Golden West Community College in Huntington Beach California in 2014. I also appreciate the opportunity to present the early version of that article at the James C. Young Colloquium, organized by the Student Association of Graduate Anthropologists (SAGA) at UCR, in March of 2014.

I should also acknowledge the assistance of philosophy professor Nicholas Power at the University of West Florida, where I worked as a postdoctoral research associate during the 2016–17 academic year. Professor Power provided useful comments on the anarchism manuscript shortly before it was accepted for publication in *Theory in Action*. I also wish to thank John Asimakopoulos, editor of *Theory in Action*, who accepted my two aforementioned studies for publication, and for providing an opportunity to guest-edit a special issue of that journal on anarchism and democracy, published in January of 2020, further enhancing my understanding of the topics.

Nearer to completion of the manuscript, I received valuable suggestions from Markus Lundström and Leonard Williams as well, for which I am grateful. Finally, I wish to thank the three anonymous reviewers for useful comments and suggestions, as well as Lorraine Klimowich and Rahul Srinivasan at Springer for helping me through the editorial process. Without the help of those individuals, this book would not have achieved the level of quality that it has. Finally, it should also be mentioned that I bear full responsibility for any imperfections – author misrepresentations, theoretical oversights, holes in the argument, factual inaccuracies, etc. – found in the following chapters.

Cortland, NY, USA Brian Williams

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Brian Williams is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at SUNY Cortland where he teaches classes in political research methods, comparative politics, and international relations. His recent empirical research has analyzed direct democracy and voter turnout, the electoral connection between voters and representatives, as well as governing coalition agreements. His work in political philosophy examines the interrelationship between anarchism and democracy. His work has been published in *The Social Science Journal*, *Representation*, *Political Science Research and Methods*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, and *Theory in Action*.

Part I
Anarchism

Chapter 1
The Arc of History



1.1 Introduction

In this introductory chapter, I provide a historical context for the book's argument, focusing on the rise of the modern sovereign state and capitalism, the spread of liberal democracy, perspectives on modernity, and a brief discussion about contemporary systemic crises and opportunities for a paradigm shift. I then introduce the argument at the heart of this book, libertarian social democracy, emphasizing its contrasts with traditional (prefigurative) anarchism, as well as its essential distinctions from political liberalism and Marxism. That is followed by an overview of the philosophy of history underpinning this book's argument, and a discussion of the potential benefits of a new interdisciplinarity between anarchism and comparative politics as a byproduct of libertarian social democracy.

1.2 Historical Context

Rise of the Modern Sovereign State

Before the Modern Era

The modern era, as I use the term here, follows the late Middle Ages, a transition which took place around the seventeenth century (using the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, which marked the end of the Reformation and formally recognized the principle of state sovereignty, as a fulcrum between the two eras). The prevailing definition of the sovereign state was provided by German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920), who described it as a political association with a monopoly on the

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legitimate use of physical force within some clearly demarcated territory.[1] Many contemporary nation-states do not fully exhibit the main attributes of the modern state as Weber defined it (Morris, 2020). Weber's definition of the sovereign state is thus better understood as an ideal type that national political associations more-or-less closely approximate today. In their review of pre-modern political associations, Graeber and Wengrow (2021) identify three dimensions of state power: (i) sovereignty (the monopoly on the use of violence), (ii) knowledge (public administration or bureaucracy), and (iii) charisma (political competition).

Ancient kingdoms and state-like entities have been found in various parts of the world, such as Athens, Greece (Bookchin, 2005, p. 165). In the Middle East, the Giza pyramids, built during the Fourth Dynasty of the Old Kingdom of Ancient Egypt (2600–2500 BC) are indicative of some sort of state (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 403). In the case of the Old Kingdom of Ancient Egypt, sovereignty and bureaucracy had been established over a large territory (ibid, p. 507). The Hebrew monarchies also constituted an early type of state (Bookchin, 2005, p. 165). In Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq), king burials (evidence of monarchy) were found in the early dynastic city-state of Ur (3800–500 BC), although "the rulers of ancient Mesopotamian city-states made no direct claims to sovereignty" (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 507). Evidence of a state-like entity has also been found in Sumeria, southern Mesopotamia (Bookchin, 2005, p. 165).

Turning to Asia, king burials have also been found in the late Shang Dynasty in China (roughly 1200–1000 BC) (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 399). Another early political association with sovereign state characteristics was Eastern Zhou Dynasty in China from 770 to 256 BCE (Fukuyama, 2011). State-like entities also existed in Southeast Asia over 2000 years ago (Diamond, 1997, p. 278). King burials were also found in the Kerma polity in Nubia near the Nile River (2500–1500 BC) (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 399). In West Africa, evidence of state-like associations from over 1000 years ago has been found (Diamond, 1997, p. 278). Meanwhile, in the Americas, signs of early states have been discovered in Mesoamerica (present-day Mexico to Nicaragua) dating to around 300 BCE, and in the Andes region from over 2000 years ago (Diamond, 1997, p. 278).

Different types of associations and societies pre-dating the modern sovereign state include bands, families, clans, tribal federations, villages, and municipalities (Bookchin, 2005, p. 71). According to Bookchin, "the dissolution of organic societies into hierarchical, class, and political societies occurred unevenly and erratically, shifting back and forth over long periods of time" (p. 70). For instance, "Until the emergence of nation-states in England, France, and Spain between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, Europe was comparatively free of the despotisms and bureaucracies that coated the social life of North Africa, the Near East, and Asia" (p. 336). At the time of the Spanish conquest in the fifteenth century, "The general consensus

[1] Anticipating Weber's definition, protestant philosopher Johannes Althusius ([1614] 1995, pp. 69–71) described sovereignty as, "the right of a major state or power as contrasted with the right that is attributed to a city or a province," adding that, "This power of the realm, or of the associated bodies, is always one power and never many."

is that there were only two unambiguous 'states' in the Americas […] the Aztecs and the Inca" (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 370).

According to Karl Marx, the modern political state emerged with the end of feudalism (Markell, 2003, p. 129). Feudalism was the primary social structure in Western Europe until the French Revolution in 1792 (Magone, 2019, p. 33) and in Russia until the end of the nineteenth century (Piketty, 2020, p. 63). Feudal structures can be roughly divided into three social strata or "estates" (as they were called in France). The first estate consisted of the clergy (*oratores*) including religious and intellectual elites. The second estate consisted of the nobility (*bellatores*), a privileged social class of knights, lords, and/or landed gentry. The third estate consisted of the commoners (*laboratores*) such as peasants, serfs, artisans, and eventually the bourgeoisie as an intermediate class. Atop this hierarchy sat a monarch or emperor. In the Middle Ages, most monarchs had to share power with the nobility in a decentralized system. By contrast, following the Norman invasion in 1066, all lords were vassals of the English monarchy who owned all the land (Magone, 2019, p. 33). Premodern ternary arrangements were also found in many non-European societies (e.g., China and Japan) and religious associations (Hindu as well as Shi'a and Sunni Muslim) (Piketty, 2020, pp. 51–2).

Emergence of the Modern Sovereign State System

Early forms of state power such as the Roman Empire, Abbasid Caliphate, and the Persian and Chinese empires can be distinguished from the modern State which "arguably gestated in the Italian city-states of the late Middle Ages" (Laursen, 2021, p. 55). The rise of the European nation-state in the late Middle Ages coincided with the decline of the universalistic Catholic Church. This process was hastened by the Renaissance and scientific revolution, which drove a wedge between the Church and the political world when it was discovered that the Earth rotates around the sun (Magone, 2019, p. 34). The decline of the papacy was also hastened by the Reformation, led by such individuals as Martin Luther (1483–1546) in Germany. Foreshadowing the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, the 1555 Augsburg Peace declared that each state of the German Empire could accept either Lutheranism or Catholicism, based on the principle *cuius regio, eius religio* – each region, the respective religion (Magone, 2019, p. 34).

The transition from the late Middle Ages to the early modern era involved the triumph of the sovereign state over other types of political association such as the universalistic Church, the city-state, the Hanseatic League in northern Germany (Spruyt, 1994), and stateless indigenous communities (Scott, 2009). The modern sovereign state began to develop in Western Europe in the late fifteenth century (Prichard, 2016, p. 130), continuing through the seventeenth century (Spruyt, 1994), and into the nineteenth century with the unification of Italy in 1861 and Germany in 1871. From the sixteenth through the end of the twentieth century, the number of states in Europe had consolidated from 500 to 25 (Bale, 2017, p. 6).

Focusing on fiscal capabilities, Piketty (2020, pp. 368–9) observes that the first "great leap forward" in the development of the modern state occurred between 1500 and 1800 among the leading states of Europe, which increased their tax revenues from 1% to 8% of national income. That process coincided with the rise of Euro-American slavery, "ownership societies" at home, and colonial empires abroad. The second leap forward took place between 1910 and 1980, when the rich countries as a group increased tax revenues from eight to between 30% and 50% of national income. Blending political, economic, and cultural features, Laursen (2021, pp. 69–79) identifies six iterations of states over the past 500 years: dynastic state, commercial oligarchy, national state, one-party state, social-democratic state, and the present-day neoliberal state.

The European sovereign state model was eventually exported to the western hemisphere, most of Africa, as well as many countries in the Middle East and Asia via colonization (Herbst, 2000; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). The subsequent waves of decolonization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries transferred sovereignty to those newly independent states, consolidating the modern state system. The sovereign state is now the predominant type of political association around the world.

Pre-modern states and quasi-states "were not as invasive of community life at the base of society as is the modern state, with its mass media, highly sophisticated surveillance systems, and its authority to supervise almost every aspect of personal life" (Bookchin, 2005, p. 165). With the gradual consolidation of state power, aided by technological advancements, it is now very difficult to find spaces of refuge from state power (Scott, 2009). As Gelderloos (2016, p. 174) notes, "[modern states] are now global and cannot be fled in the proper sense." According to Diamond (1997, p. 278), "The political, economic, and social institutions most familiar to us today are those of states, which now rule all of the world's land area except for Antarctica." In a similar vein, Pettit (2014, p. 117) asserts that "there is no effectively stateless zone left on earth […] You are condemned to life in a polity as a matter of historical necessity." Autonomous zones established within state boundaries, such as the *Zone a défendre* (ZAD) in France,[2] the *Exarchia* in Greece,[3] the territory held by the

[2] Willsher, K. (2017, December 28). *End of la ZAD? France's 'utopian' anti-airport community faces bitter last stand*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/dec/28/end-of-la-zad-frances-utopian-anti-airport-community-faces-bitter-last-stand

[3] Crabapple, M. (2020, January 20). *The Attack on Exarchia, An Anarchist Refuge in Athens*. The New Yorker. https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/the-attack-on-exarchia-an-anarchist-refuge-in-athens

Kurdish *Yekineyen Parastina Gel* (YPG) militia in Northern Syria,[4] or the Capital Hill Autonomous Zone in Seattle,[5] tend to be disrupted by the state.[6]

Emergence of State Capitalism

Capitalism and Trade Before the Industrial Revolution

In the economic realm, the rise of modern sovereign states roughly coincided with the emergence of capitalist economic systems. Many pre-state societies relied on the principle of *usufruct* – the sharing of resources – in contrast to early-modern ideas such as communal property, reciprocity, and mutual aid (Bookchin, 2005, p. 117). Many mutual aid organizations would eventually be replaced by state welfare systems, as Kropotkin explains in *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*.[7] Some early Eurasian cities (3500–1600 BCE) such as Uruk and Harappa engaged in trade relations, as did Aboriginal Californians (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, pp. 142–3). However, such practices should not be confused with capitalism, which involves "constant reinvestment, turning one's wealth into an engine for creating ever more wealth" (ibid, p. 178).

Piketty (2020, p. 971) describes capitalism as "the extension of proprietarianism [a political ideology based on the absolute defense of private property] to the age of large scale industry, international finance, and more recently to the digital economy." According to Piketty (2020, p. 369), "the development of the centralized [European] state coincided with the transformation of ternary [feudal] societies into ownership societies, accompanied by the rise of proprietarian [capitalist] ideology and based on strict separation of regalian powers [the state] from property rights."

According to Price (2013, p. 69), the first stage of capitalism ("primitive accumulation") began as early as the fourteenth century and reached its high point in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Nascent signs of capitalism are found in the Hanseatic League of northern Europe in the late-twelfth century (Spruyt, 1994, pp. 120–1), and in the dynamic urban centers of the Netherlands and northern

[4] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2019, October 10). *Turkey Syria offensive: Heavy fighting on second day of assault.* https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-49998035

[5] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2020, June 22). *Seattle to end police-free protest zone after shootings.* https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53146258

[6] Autonomous zones such as that in Rojava may also be tolerated by the central government at least for a certain period (Clark, 2019, p. 130). As another exception, in 2012, collective ownership of the Christiania neighborhood in Denmark was achieved in a deal with the City of Copenhagen (Nielsen, 2020, p. 146).

Also, the autonomous zone of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico has been sustained since 1994 at a relatively large scale (Raekstad & Gradin, 2020, p. 84).

[7] Kropotkin, P. (1902). *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. The Anarchist Library. Retrieved Aug. 10, 2021, from https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/petr-kropotkin-mutual-aid-a-factor-of-evolution

city-states of Italy in the late Middle Ages (Magone, 2019, p. 34). Also noteworthy, England's Act of Union with Scotland in 1707 introduced "new principles of free market capitalism across the country" (ibid, p. 37).

Even with the rise of liberal (laissez-faire) capitalism, a minimal state was commonly viewed as essential to economic development, especially for the clarification and protection of property rights. For instance, John Locke felt that the government and the state were justified by the need to protect private property (paraphrased by Reagan, 2021, p. 75). Even in the nineteenth century at "the height of [capitalism's] well-being as a system, [when] it relied mainly on market forces" (Price, 2013, p. 69), the state played an important role in establishing property rights. For example, although there was little government regulation of the railways in Britain following "Railway Mania" in the 1840s, Acts of Parliament set up new railway companies and charters recognized private ownership.[8] Given this close relationship between capitalism and the state, I will refer to the modern sovereign state and capitalist economic systems jointly as *state capitalism*.[9]

Industrial Revolution and Manchester Capitalism

During the early-modern stages of capitalist development, some European states, such as England (beginning in the early seventeenth century), passed enclosure laws, which clarified property rights over parcels of land previously held in common, pressuring many peasants to migrate to emergent urban centers where the industrial revolution was taking shape. Supporters of the Enclosure Acts and industrialization argued such developments were essential for meeting the needs of the burgeoning populations of Western Europe.[10] Indeed, early modern tools such as the wheel, kiln, smelter, and loom "provided an increasing abundance of food, clothing, shelter, tools, and transportation" (Bookchin, 2005, p. 131). During the first industrial revolution, "[s]ubsistence agriculture and crafts gave way to mass production of standardized goods" (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, pp. 171–2). For example, in seventeenth century England, agriculture declined from 80% to 60% of the national

[8] Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Economic History of the United Kingdom*. Retrieved August 28, 2022, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_history_of_the_United_Kingdom#Railways

[9] The term "state capitalism" has also been used (e.g., by Peter Kropotkin) to describe situations where the state controls the economy and accumulates wealth from the surplus value of labor, similar to a private enterprise (Price, 2013, p. 113).

[10] Christina Croft. (2013, March 28). *The Enclosures & the Agricultural Revolution* [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hl-HznLeQs0. Other signs of early modernization could be found in France after the French Revolution (in the early 1800s), as property rights over land in the Forests of Orleans were clarified, and, with regards to drainage systems in Normandy, property rights concerning rights of way, compensation for damages, and eminent domain were clarified as well (Rosenthal, 1992). In Germany, the aristocracy began the process of enclosure in the early 1500s, making it illegal for peasants to log wood or fish from certain lands, thus forming part of the context for The Peasants War of 1525. Wikipedia. (n.d.). *German Peasants' War: Patricians*. Retrieved August 14, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Peasants%27_War

economy, rural workers became more dependent on commercial markets, and merchant shipping (exports and imports) increased (Lawson, 2019, p. 100).

England's industrial revolution would fully emerge in the mid-late eighteenth century, fueled by new technologies such as power looms and mechanical spinners in the textile industry, and steam-powered machinery (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 12). Coinciding with the industrial revolution, Boix (2019, p. 111) identifies three factors ushering in the period of "Manchester capitalism": specialization (splitting the process of production), mechanization (automating as many of those tasks as possible), and the factory plant (clustering productive functions into a single space). During Manchester capitalism, skilled craftsmen (who made entire products by hand) were replaced by less skilled employees who specialized in specific actions in the chain of production (Boix, 2019, p. 5). For example, after British handloom weavers had doubled in number between the late 1780s (following the invention of the spinning mule) and the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, this sector of workers was devastated by the introduction of the power loom in the early nineteenth century (ibid, p. 33). Writing in the nineteenth century, Karl Marx distinguished proletariat (urban working class forced to sell their labor) from the bourgeoisie (owners of means of production) and predicted an emergent socialist challenge to capitalism.

Globalization 1.0: From Mercantilism to Free Trade (Nineteenth Century)

Prior to the rise of liberal capitalism in the West, early modern states relied more heavily on mercantilist forms of wealth accumulation such as monopolies – either government-owned (e.g., the Spanish Crown's colonial gold mines in Latin America) or government-sanctioned (e.g., the Dutch East India Company) – as well as different forms of protectionism. For example, England's Navigation Act of 1651 mandated that all goods imported from Holland be transported in ships from England or the country where the goods were originally produced, undercutting Dutch shipping (since few imports from Holland were produced there) (Mearsheimer, 2014, p. 48). As another example, farmers in colonial Virginia could only sell their tobacco to England (reducing demand and therefore price), and Virginians could only buy manufactured goods from England (reducing supply and thus raising prices) (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 6). Another well-known example of protectionism is the British Corn Law tariffs on imported grains (eventually overturned in 1846).

The rise of capitalism in the West occurred both in theory (notably, the classical liberal ideas of Locke, Smith, and Ricardo) and in practice (i.e., the industrial revolution and period of free trade which emerged during the Pax Britannica, 1815–1914[11]). The first period of liberal globalization was characterized by the gold

[11] Frieden, Lake, and Schultz (2019, p. 13) describe the rise of free trade during that time as follows: "After Britain, the world's most important economy, discarded mercantilism [in the 1840s], many of the nation's customers and suppliers followed suit. In 1860, France joined Great Britain in a sweeping commercial treaty that freed trade between them and subsequently drew most of the

standard, as well as increases in international trade, investment, and migration.[12] This period of globalization would come to an end with the onset of World War I. The "Thirty Years Crisis" (World Wars I and II, and the inter-war period) were characterized by protectionism, beginning with the industrialized countries and spreading to the developing world (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 446).

Detroit Capitalism and the Keynesian Consensus (Twentieth Century)

The establishment of the Bretton Woods institutions after World War II facilitated a reemergence of free trade among the advanced Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) economies of North America, Western Europe, Japan, and Australasia, while many countries in the developing world turned toward a more protectionist form of socialism or import substitution industrialization (ISI).[13] Some countries from the global South succeeded in developing their own domestic manufacturing industries that way.[14] However, only a small share of world exports went from developing to developed countries, and those were mostly primary rather than manufactured goods. Most exports remained among the OECD countries (Boix, 2019, p. 109).

The mid-twentieth century period of "Detroit capitalism" – named after the Ford factory established there in the early-twentieth century – was characterized by "efficiently run assembly lines and spotless factories," balanced power relations between corporate management and union bosses, good pay and benefits for employees, patterns of class voting (with working classes voting left, and middle classes voting right), and 30 years of egalitarian income growth (Boix, 2019, p. 91). This period reflected a compromise between socialists, on the one hand, who accepted political pluralism, competitive elections, and a regulated market economy, and liberals and conservatives, on the other hand, who agreed to a system of embedded capitalism characterized by a mixed economy, a stabilizing regulatory framework, and a welfare state with universal insurance against unemployment, sickness, and old age.

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rest of Europe in this direction. As the German states moved toward unification in 1871, they created a free-trade area among themselves and then opened trade with the rest of the world. Many New World governments also reduced trade barriers, as did the remaining colonial possessions of the free-trading European powers."

[12] According to Frieden, Lake, and Schultz (2019, p. 378), "For the most part, before 1914 Europeans could move and work wherever they pleased (Asian immigration was much more heavily restricted). While international labor movements in recent years have been very large, they are proportionally smaller than those of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."

[13] Some developing countries remained open to export-oriented development during that time, such as Chile under the Pinochet regime in the 1970s, and the "Asian Tiger" economies – South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore – beginning in the 1960s (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 448).

[14] By the 1970s, many developing countries pursuing ISI – e.g., India, Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina – had become nearly self-sufficient in manufacturing products. For example, between 1950 and 1970, Brazil and Mexico had increased automobile production to about one million cars per year (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 447).

This compromise "eventually tempered the politics of the twentieth century" (Boix, 2019, p. 11).

Part of the post-war "Fordist" settlement was neo-corporatist systems of interest intermediation, according to which the major social partners – labor unions and business associations, organized into centralized peak associations – would participate in tripartite negotiations with government representatives over industrial relations issues such as wages and employment protection. "A central goal of corporatism is to avoid potentially damaging conflict between trade unions and employer associations" (Ansell & Torfing, 2021, p. 50). However, "[a]s the long period of postwar economic growth slowed, in part due to the exhaustion of the economic potential of Fordist technologies of mass production, the corporatist system eroded and only survived in modified form" (ibid, p. 51).

Globalization 2.0: The Neoliberal Era (1980-Present)

The information and communication revolution beginning in the 1970s affected the workforce of advanced OECD countries directly through job automation, and indirectly through the outsourcing of jobs (Boix, 2019). The sharp fall in transportation and communication costs made it unnecessary to integrate all jobs in a single plant, factory, or single corporation. As a result, "factoryless manufacturing" – where preproduction activities (such as design and engineering) are undertaken in the firm's home country, while goods are manufactured abroad – became more widespread. In the United States, factoryless manufacturing could be found in the apparel sector as early as the 1950s, consumer goods (e.g., toys) in the 1970s, and semiconductors and finished goods (e.g., electronics) in the early-2000s. In Japan and Germany about one-quarter of all firms had offshored their production by the mid-2000s, and in Germany close to 60% of large companies had done so (Boix, 2019, pp. 111–4). Across advanced industrial economies, it is estimated that about one-third of all employment losses over the past few decades are due to trade and job outsourcing (ibid, p. 15).

Coinciding with this increase in outsourcing, "manufacturing lost ground to services and – most importantly – to creating and processing information" (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, p. 172). The new service sector economies include low-skill jobs such as janitors and food preparation and higher-skills positions (requiring "deep knowledge and original thinking") such as consultants, architects, engineers, doctors, academics, artists, designers, entertainers, athletes, and journalists. By 2015, the share of workers in high-skill service sector jobs in Western Europe ranged from 26% in Portugal to 54% in Luxembourg (ibid). In the United States, high-skilled occupations increased from almost 28 percent of total employment in 1980 to 39% in 2010 (Boix, 2019, p. 14).

Liberal market ideas also began to seep into the public sector, affecting the norms of public administration. Notably, there was a transition from the Weberian-style classical public administration to a more market-oriented New Public Management model, thus changing the public sector from public authority to "service provider"

(Ansell & Torfing, 2021, p. 10). Ansell and Torfing (2021, p. 1) explain this transition as follows:

> At the beginning of the 1970s, the successful expansion of liberal democracy and bureaucratic government gradually gave way to mounting criticisms of the long-term sustainability of the public sector, the inefficiency and lack of responsiveness of public bureaucracy, and the failure of liberal democracy to maintain a high level of participation and trust in government and to prevent alienation of large sections of the population. The neoliberal response was to privatize or contract out services, introduce an elaborate system of performance measurement, and turn citizens into customers who could supplement voting with a new ability to 'vote with their feet.'

Meanwhile, beginning in the 1980s, less developed countries also began to adopt more liberal economic policies, for instance, by increasing the flow of international trade and investment around the world (Frieden et al., 2019, pp. 449–50). Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, neoliberal globalization has become the predominant international paradigm in the economic realm.

The Spread of Liberal Democracy

Pre-modern Democratic Societies

Like state capitalism, liberal democracy – that is, a political system characterized by free and fair competition between at least two political parties, universal suffrage, and constitutional rights (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, p. 7) – has become a cornerstone of the modern era. As is the case with state-like entities, pre-modern examples of democratic societies can also be found in the historical record. An early version of limited democracy prevailed in Athens from roughly 450 to 322 BCE. However, between then and the modern era, sustained democratic political systems at a polity-wide and/or national level were basically non-existent in the West (Wolin, 2008, p. 242). A form of democracy is also believed to have thrived in ancient India, between the sixth century BCE and the fourth century AD.[15]

The Early-Modern Emergence of Democratic Rights

In the late Middle Ages, the first nation-states of Western Europe – France, Spain, Portugal, and England – increased their ability to control and expand their territory, guided by the principle of territorial sovereignty or *raison d'état*. These states had absolutist monarchical forms of government, undergirded by a cultural belief in the divine right of kings to rule. A quintessential example of absolutism was France

[15] Muhlberger, S. (1998, February 8). *Democracy in Ancient India*. Nipissing University. https://uts.nipissingu.ca/muhlberger/histdem/indiadem.htm

under Louis XIII and Louis XIV in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Magone, 2019, pp. 33–35).

As the modern era began to emerge, several European countries overthrew their absolutist monarchs, including the Polish republic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Dutch republic of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and the English republic of the 1640s and 1650s. Around that time, "Across Europe, republicanism became the dominant political philosophy of reformers and revolutionaries" (Pettit, 2014, p. 9). Then there were the "classic liberal revolutions," beginning with the Glorious Revolution in England in 1688–9 (establishing parliamentary sovereignty), the American Revolution from 1765 to 1783, the French Revolution from 1789 to 1799, and the "European Spring" revolutions of 1848.

Certain advancements in human rights also seem to fit in with this narrative of early democratic development. For instance, according to Michel Foucault, "the West underwent a revolution in penal philosophy and practices between 1760 and 1840. The deliberate infliction of pain gave way to more 'humane' and invisible punishments, sometimes combined with attempts at rehabilitation" (paraphrased by Guriev & Treisman, 2022, p. 38).[16] Also relevant to the spread of democracy was the abolition of chattel slavery in such countries as Haiti (1804), the United Kingdom (1834), the United States (1865), and Brazil (1888), to name a few, as well as the decolonization of many countries within Latin America in the early nineteenth century.

The Three Waves of Modern Democratization

Some trace the origins of modern democracy back to the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

For instance, according to Przeworski (2019, p. 16), "Democracy […] was born only in 1788, when the first national-level election based on individual suffrage took place in the United States; the first time in history that the helm of a government changed as the result of an election was in 1801, also in the United States." However, prior to the late 1840s, less than 10% of adult men had the right to vote in most Western countries (Boix, 2019, p. 44).

Since the mid-nineteenth century, three waves of democratization have swept over different regions of the world (Huntington, 1991). The first wave of democracy began in earnest with the expansion of the right to vote in some Western countries in the mid-late nineteenth century, such as universal male suffrage in France in 1848, the United States (USA) by 1856, Britain's Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884, and Belgium in 1893. Suffrage was further expanded in Western Europe before and

[16] According to Guriev and Treisman (2022, p. 38), "Foucault also argued, more controversially, that the replacement of corporal punishment with less visible forms of discipline facilitated the spread of such power mechanisms into a broad range of social settings." Of course, to the extent that democracies continue to violate human rights but in less visible ways than autocracies, this raises questions about the amount of real progress achieved, a topic I will revisit in the next chapter.

after World War I, although women did not get the right to vote until after World War II in some countries such as Greece and Belgium (Przeworski, 2009, Fig. 8). The second wave of democratization occurred after World War II with the fall of fascism, a new wave of decolonization in Africa and Asia, and some cases of democratization. For example, India introduced universal suffrage in 1947 after gaining independence from Britain (Piketty, 2020, p. 248).

The third wave of democratization began with the fall of the remaining authoritarian regimes of Western Europe (Portugal, Spain, and Greece) in the 1970s, as well as in Latin America (Chile, Argentina, and Brazil) and Asia (Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines), plus the decline of the Soviet Union and the "second liberation of Africa" in the late 1980s and early-1990s. One might also mention Mexico's democratizing reforms in the 1990s, following a long period of rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 73). Subsequent events might also be added to the third wave, such as the Color Revolutions in central and eastern Europe in the 1990s and 2000s (Way, 2008). The Arab Spring uprisings which took place in the Middle East and North Africa around 2011 (Biekart & Fowler, 2013) were viewed as part of a possible fourth wave of democracy.[17] By 2015, more than half of all countries were electoral democracies, and about one-quarter liberal democracies (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, p. 7).

In the cultural realm, it has also been argued that democracy became a universal value during the twentieth century (Sen, 1999). Thus it is perhaps not surprising that "at this point in history, most people are ready to give lip service to democracy" (Inglehart, 2018, p. 120). Similarly, Held (1987, p. 1) observes that democracy "seems to bestow an 'aura of legitimacy' on modern political life," and Achen and Bartels (2016, p. 18) mention that, "Democracy is the justifying political ideology of our era."

Where democracy was not achieved, popular support for it has pressured authoritarian regimes to appear more democratic. Thus, between the 1970s and the 2000s, "fear dictatorships" (relying on visible forms of repression) declined from 60% to less than one-tenth of all dictatorships, while spin dictatorships (relying more on the manipulation of information) rose from 13% to 53% (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, Fig. 1.1). Also, since the onset of the third wave, "multiparty elections surged […] reaching 78 percent of autocracies in 2018" (ibid, p. 132). In sum, world politics is now characterized by sovereign states, state capitalism, and the ascendance of democratic political systems as an international norm (and in practice for a little over half the nation-states of the world).

[17] Diamond, L. (2011, May 22). *A Fourth Wave or False Start?* Foreign Affairs. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2011-05-22/fourth-wave-or-false-start

1.3 The Modern Era in Perspective

Perspectives on the Rise of State Capitalism

Thinking About Property: Progress and Golden Age Perspectives

What is the broader significance of "modernization," by which I mean the longer-term development of the sovereign state and capitalist economic systems?[18] What are the implications of the rise of state capitalism (and related phenomena such as private property and advanced technology) for human liberty? In his book *Thinking about Property*, Peter Garnsey (2007) distinguishes between two general perspectives toward the rise of property rights: On the one hand, the "progress narrative" sees private property rights (and the rise of state capitalism, more recently) as essential to a more prosperous civilization. On the other hand, the "Golden Age perspective" views the transition away from the state of nature (when resources were held in common) as an unfortunate, even sacrilegious development in human affairs. In what follows, I will review evidence in-line with a Golden Age perspective (emphasizing pre-state egalitarianism) as well as evidence in-line the progress perspective (emphasizing pre-state hierarchy) before summarizing this book's hybrid position on the topic.

The Golden Age Perspective: Modernization as Tragedy

Consistent with the Golden Age perspective, the longer-term transition from indigenous states of nature to state capitalism can be viewed as a historically tragic development. Tragic, not only due to the history of colonialism and slavery (which coincided with the rise of state capitalism), war-making among states, and human rights violations perpetrated by state actors, but also because pre-state indigenous communities often had free and ecologically sustainable ways of life (Scott, 2009; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014).[19] From that perspective, state capitalism has unnecessarily undermined human freedom.[20] A classic view along these lines is found in

[18] This longer-term understanding of modernization will allow me to compare pre-state societies to modern state capitalist societies. By contrast, Guriev and Treisman (2022, p. 170) associate modernization with more recent developments including (i) the shift from industrial to postindustrial society, (ii) the globalization of economies and information, and (iii) the rise of a liberal international order. They focus more on how this "modernization cocktail" has pressured authoritarian states to democratize in recent decades.

[19] For example, one study found that indigenous peoples sustainably managed much of Earth's land for thousands of years prior to colonialism. Rosane, O. (2021, April 21). *Humans Sustainably Managed Much of Earth's Lands for Thousands of Years, Study Affirms*. EcoWatch. https://www.ecowatch.com/indigenous-land-conservation-earth-history-2652676314.html

[20] In Chap. 2, I will describe a *free society*, as one which relies primarily on informal (non-state) institutions. This is not to deny the relative freedom of liberal democratic societies today, but rather to set the bar somewhat higher for achieving the status of a free society in the absolute sense.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* (1754), in which he distinguished between the egalitarianism of hunter-gatherers, and how this was corrupted by modern civilization.

In *The Ecology of Freedom*, Bookchin (2005, p. 298) highlights the arrogance of modernist worldviews, asking: "Was capitalism a more 'sophisticated' substitute for medieval society? To say 'yes' would be arrogant presumption and an insult to the highly complex civilizations, both past and present, that have resisted 'modernization'." Moreover, Bookchin writes, "It is testimony to the benign power inherent in organic society that so many cultures did *not* follow the social route to Statehood, mobilized labor, class distinctions, and professional warfare – indeed, that they often retreated into remoter areas to spare themselves this destiny" (p. 338).

Graeber and Wengrow (2021) also provide evidence of societies governed in non-hierarchical ways prior to the modern era. For example, among the mega-sites of Ukraine (4100–3300 BC), Talianky extended over 300 hectares, and yet no evidence of central administration, communal storage facilities, government buildings, fortifications, or monumental architecture were found there (ibid, 291). Also, no evidence of monarchy has been found in Minoan Crete (1700–1450 BC), in contrast to palatial societies of roughly the same age "such as those of Zimri-Lim at Mari on the Syrian Euphrates, or in Hittite Anatolia to the north, or Egypt" (ibid, p. 434). In South Asia, Buddhist monasteries from roughly the fifth century BC, or *sangha*, regularly convened public assemblies in which monks would "gather together in order to reach unanimous decisions on matters of general concern, resorting to majority vote only when consensus broke down" (ibid, p. 319).

Turning to the Americas, research has confirmed earlier accounts showing that, prior to the arrival of Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés in the early sixteenth century Mexico, the city-state of Tlaxcala (in east-central Mexico) was "an indigenous republic governed not by a king, nor even by rotating office holders, but by a council of elected officials answerable to the citizenry as a whole" (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 355). Also, Tenochtitlan – an island-city in the Valley of Mexico, and capital of the Aztec Triple Alliance around AD 1150 – "had, at the height of its power, found a way to govern itself without overlords" (ibid, pp. 328–30). As another example, the Iroquois confederacies of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century North America were able to "turn their backs on the legacy of Cahokia, with its over-weening lords and priests, and to reorganize themselves into free republics" (ibid, p. 503). These examples show that people can establish geographically expansive non-hierarchical political associations, and often did prior to the modern era.

Roughly corresponding to this non-state understanding of freedom, Graeber and Wengrow (2021, p. 503) describe a free society as including the freedom to move, ignore rulers, and shape new social realities. Although I will not provide an in-depth analysis of the different meanings of freedom, I might note the distinction between a *free society* (just mentioned), and freedom in the sense of having *individual agency* (against macro-level deterministic forces of history) – a topic discussed below. In this book, the term freedom is applied primarily at the societal level, as in a free and equal society (i.e., equal liberty).

The Progress Perspective: Benefits of Modernization

Of course, evidence from pre-state societies does not paint a picture of a completely egalitarian Golden Age. For instance, during the Middle Pacific period (1850 BC to AD 200), archeological evidence from burial sites give an overall impression "of a wide spectrum of formalized statuses, ranging from high rank to people whose lives and deaths appear to have mattered little" (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 186). Fast-forwarding to the years just before European colonization, Graeber and Wengrow compare two broad cultural areas along the west coast of North America and find that "Slavery was endemic on the Northwest Coast but correspondingly absent south of the Klamath River in California" (p. 185).

Bookchin (2005) provides some examples of injustices and inequalities which existed in pre-states societies. For instance, "To torture animals – or men and women captives, in intertribal conflicts – was regarded as routine behavior among a large number of preliterate peoples" (p. 47). There was also a sense of insecurity in many cases: "The anthropological literature is replete with examples in which the old are killed or expelled during periods of hunger" (ibid, p. 151). Also, the Northwest Coast Indians societies "had slaves, and presumably the very 'last and lowliest citizen knew his precise hereditary position with an [exactly] defined distance from the chief'" (ibid, p. 197).

Over the last 2000 years or so, "Even in places where monarchy did not exist – much of Africa or Oceania, for example – we find that (at the very least) patriarchy, and often violent domination of other sorts, have been widespread" (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 443). Meanwhile, in Western Europe during the Late Middle Ages, the emergence of bourgeois businessmen in "pockets of capitalism" – found in dynamic urban centers in the city-states of Northern Italy, the Netherlands, and the Hanseatic League of Northern Germany – began to undermine the stratified societies of the feudal era (Magone, 2019, 34).

In-line with the progress narrative, one can emphasize two potential advantages of state capitalism over its pre-state alternatives. First, state capitalism is arguably more conducive than its alternatives to the development of quality of life-enhancing technologies in food production, health care, transportation, and communications. For instance, state capitalism set the stage for advances in refrigeration, antibiotics, running water, airplanes, the internet, and dental plans (Caplan & Weinersmith, 2019, p. 30).

Second, the modern sovereign state has a greater capacity to create and enforce just laws, given its more-or-less consolidated monopoly on physical coercion. A classic perspective corresponding roughly with this progress view, Thomas Hobbes argued in *Leviathan* (1651) that centralized states were necessitated by a life in the state of nature likely to be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." In *The Narrow Corridor*, Acemoglu and Robinson (2019, p. 24) argue plausibly that, "there is room for liberty in human affairs and this critically depends on the emergence of states and state institutions." From that perspective, states are essential for security, the protection of individual rights, and the provision of essential public goods.

In turn, these two advantages of state capitalism – technology and security – may yield better outcomes (than pre-state societies) as found, for instance, in public health outcomes such as life expectancy. In-line with such arguments, evolutionary modernization theory emphasizes the benefits of state capitalist development including widespread prosperity, nutrition, health care, and rising life expectancy (Inglehart, 2018, p. 11). Indeed, both average life expectancy and the literacy rate have climbed steadily since 1820 (Piketty, 2020, p. 16).

Discussing the transition from the late Middle Ages to the modern era, Magone (2019, p. 33) writes, "The Middle Ages […] was a period of melancholy and intense sadness. It was also characterised by pessimism. This reflected the life that people had to endure, which was marked by human insecurity, wars and the subsequent devastation they caused, and the very rapid spread of disease, including the plague." However, with the emergence of capitalism in the late Middle Ages, "A new, more self-confident *Zeitgeist* was replacing the sad melancholic world of the Middle Ages" (ibid, p. 34).

Harmonizing Modernization and Equal Liberty

In their book *The Dawn of Everything*, Graeber and Wengrow (2021) rebuke both the progress and the Golden Age stories as being too simplistic and unidimensional, suggesting the need for a more nuanced position. Both the Golden Age and progress perspectives make valid points: the rise of state capitalism has been tragic in a variety of ways, but there are also real benefits attributable to modernization. Even if one leans more strongly toward the Golden Age (state capitalism as tragedy) perspective, "we cannot return to an idyllic 'Garden of Eden'" (Bookchin, 2005, p. 62) and, while many countries have happily relied on subsistence agriculture for generations, it would be difficult for a modernized country to revert to a pre-industrial way of life (Fukuyama, 1992, p. 85).

Anticipating Boix's distinction between technological optimists and pessimists (discussed below), Bookchin (2005) emphasizes that technology can lead to one of two outcomes, historically speaking: Domination by man over nature and people (the status quo) on the one hand (the pessimistic view), or natural variety, egalitarianism, and leisure ("liberatory technology") on the other (the optimistic view).[21] This book's perspective on modernization corresponds with Bookchin's libertarian municipalism which "does not advocate primitivism but rather an ethically informed technological optimism" (paraphrased by Condit, 2019, p. 148). That is, from the perspective of libertarian social democracy (this book's argument), societies should

[21] Similarly, Price (2013, p. 128) observes that, given technological development under capitalism it is possible that the economy "could provide plenty for everyone, with only a minimum of labor and plenty of leisure time."

aim to harmonize the benefits of technology with the pursuit of equal liberty (the optimistic outcome).[22]

Technology and the Future of Democratic Capitalism

As discussed by Boix (2019) in *Democratic Capitalism at the Crossroads*, perspectives differ with regard to the expected longer-term impacts of globalization and technological development, especially automation. On the one hand, *technological pessimists* anticipate greater wealth concentration in the hands of a small creative class (inventors, top managers, and highly educated professionals), oligarchical government, deepening political divisions, and eventually the collapse of democratic capitalism. On the other hand, *technological optimists* anticipate some near-term alienation of lower-skilled from higher-skilled workers eventually giving way to a more egalitarian democratic capitalist good society with a generous social welfare system (ibid, pp. 189–91).

Technology's impacts on public welfare can be either positive or negative, depending on the outcomes of politics – what Boix calls the employment-equality tradeoff – in the context of global competition (p. 159). On the one hand, governments can prioritize employment over equality (an economically liberal approach), favoring privatization and labor market flexibility, thus creating more dynamic economies and innovations, and creating (private sector) jobs, but potentially exacerbating inequality of wealth and life chances. For example, in the early 2000s, the Schroeder government in Germany prioritized labor-market reforms to adjust industries to heightened international competition: unemployment benefits tied to workfare programs, reduction of income support for the long-term unemployed, and the creation of new, more flexible jobs.

Conversely, governments can prioritize maintaining equality over labor market flexibility (a more socially democratic approach) through state-based social welfare policies, subsidies, or other types of interventions.[23] For example, to limit inequality during the financial and euro crises (2008–13), the Dutch government provided an incentive to employers to shorten employee work hours by subsidizing worker time off and training programs, thus ensuring that most Dutch citizens would have some job opportunities (Magone, 2019, p. 359). By the early 2010s, three-quarters of all

[22] In a similar vein, "Marx believed that socialism was only possible when technology had become potentially productive enough. Only this allowed a return to the equality and freedom of early human hunter-gatherer societies but with a much higher standard of living" (Price, 2013, p. 129).

[23] Such social democratic or Keynesian approaches can also moderate business cycle "booms and busts". For example, under the post-World War II mixed economies, business cycles still occurred but "in a shallower, more moderate, fashion than before" (Price, 2013, p. 94).

Dutch women and one-quarter of Dutch men worked less than 36 hours a week (Boix, 2019, p. 132).[24]

Which political approach – liberal flexible labor markets vs. social democratic equality – will lead to the technological optimist outcome is, of course, an ideological question. In Chap. 3, I will present an argument for a libertarian mixed economy which, while balanced overall, leans more toward the equality (social democracy) than employment (economic liberalism) side of the tradeoff Boix identifies. I might also quarrel with the premise that democratic capitalism is itself a desirable outcome, emphasizing instead the equal liberty maximizing vision of libertarian social democracy (more on this distinction in the chapters ahead).

Looking Ahead: Systemic Crisis and Transformative Change

Contemporary Systemic Crises

Przeworski (2019, p. 9) describes crises as "situations that cannot last, in which something must be decided." Several crises (or quasi-crises) have emerged, in the context of the contemporary period of liberal democracy and neoliberal globalization. For example, in the economic realm, the industrial revolution has brought about a longer-term ecological crisis known as global warming. Thus, Laursen (2021, p. 47) observes that "Today, with catastrophic climate change looming, we are fighting for more than a just society; we are fighting for survival." During the current neoliberal era, low interest rates and financial sector deregulation set the stage for the 2008 financial crisis following the US housing market collapse.[25] According to Wolfgang Streeck (2017, p. 56), "with the crash of 2008, the promise of self-regulating markets attaining equilibrium on their own was discredited." Also reflecting on that event, Wayne Price (2013, p. 153) posits that "2008 was the beginning of a new period of crisis-ridden decline." Compounding matters, "The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 roared through an already destabilized global economic

[24] In recent decades, West European governments have often adopted some blend of flexible labor market reforms and social welfare interventions. For example, while the German government had adopted flexible labor market reforms in the early 2000s, it also implemented a short-term work scheme following the 2008 financial crisis like the Netherlands (Magone, 2019, p. 361). And while the Dutch government had adopted a short-term work scheme, it also transitioned to a "flexicurity system" via the Wassenaar (1982) and Modriaan (2013) agreements between trade unions and business organizations (Magone, 2019, p. 359).

[25] Hunt and Stanley (2019) argue that the neoliberal paradigm effectively ended with the financial crisis of 2008, and that we are now living in a period of interregnum where previously marginal economic ideas – e.g., crypto currencies, socialism, universal basic income (UBI), and alternatives to GDP as a measure of wealth – are gaining more traction in the mainstream and challenging the pre-2008 neoliberal orthodoxy. According to Hunt and Stanley, "These challenges do not necessarily cohere together to form an alternative paradigm, yet it might be through their incoherence that a moment of potential transformation is made more likely."

system suffering from a deep crisis of legitimacy," writes columnist Walden Bello.[26] Meanwhile, Thomas Hanna (2018, p. 144) refers to a more general systemic crisis "threatening to engulf the current system of corporate capitalism."

In the political realm, liberal democracy also appears to be in crisis. That is, there are various signs that the advancement of liberal democracy in the world has plateaued in recent years and that we may even be in the midst of a third counterwave.[27] According to the non-governmental organization Freedom House, "2019 was the 14th consecutive year of decline in global freedom."[28] Today, the world seems to have stagnated at about half of all nation-states being classified as free by Freedom House. Meanwhile, support for the traditional modes of representative politics has declined (Tormey, 2015) along with support for liberal democracy itself, for instance, among millennials in the United States.[29] Voter turnout in general elections has also declined, especially in the European countries "where it has dipped 10 percentage points since 1980" (Ansell & Torfing, 2021, p. 164).

Numerous countries have also witnessed a resurgence of far-right political parties and nationalistic populist movements with anti-democratic views in recent years (Inglehart, 2018).[30] For instance, Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán, in a 2014 speech declared that "the new state that we are constructing in Hungary is an illiberal state, a non-liberal state."[31] In October 2016, Kinna, Prichard, and Swann noticed that "Western democracies are in turmoil. From Brexit to Donald Trump, to a general lack of trust in politics, disillusioned voters are expressing their frustration in strange ways."[32] Also noticing this development, Wendy Brown (2019, p. 1) observes that "hard-right forces have surged to power in liberal democracies across the globe."

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[26] Bello, W. (2020, May 19). *The Race to Replace a Dying Neoliberalism*. Counter Punch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/05/19/the-race-to-replace-a-dying-neoliberalism/

[27] Diamond, L. (2016, July–August). *Democracy In Decline: How Washington Can Reverse the Tide*. Foreign Affairs. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2016-06-13/democracy-decline

[28] Repucci, S. (n.d.). *Freedom In The World 2020: A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy*. Freedom House. Retrieved June 11, 2020, from https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2020/leaderless-struggle-democracy

[29] Woolf, C. (2016, November 29). *Is Liberal Democracy Dying?* The World. https://theworld.org/stories/2016-11-29/democracy-dying

[30] Of course, not all populists harbor anti-democratic views. For instance, one study found that populists are more supportive of direct democracy. Zaslove, A., et al. (2020, July 21). *There is little evidence citizens with populist attitudes are less democratic*. London School of Economics. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2020/07/21/there-is-little-evidence-citizens-with-populist-attitudes-are-less-democratic/

[31] Orbán, V. (2014, July 30). *Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Speech at the 25th Bálványos Summer Free University and Student Camp*. Hungarian Prime Minister. http://2010-2015.miniszterelnok.hu/in_english_article/_prime_minister_viktor_orban_s_speech_at_the_25th_balvanyos_summer_free_university_and_student_camp

[32] Kinna, R., Prichard, A., Swann, T. (2016, October 28). *Iceland's crowd-sourced constitution: hope for disillusioned voters everywhere*. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/icelands-crowd-sourced-constitution-hope-for-disillusioned-voters-everywhere-67803

Such developments may suggest a stagnation in the spread of liberal democracy, rather than a full counterwave. For instance, according to Ansell and Torfing (2021, p. 20), recent challenges to liberal democracy, while necessitating solutions, "do not mean that democracy is terminally ill." Also offering a more optimistic interpretation, Guriev and Treisman (2022, p. 216) emphasize that majorities in most countries continue to favor democratic political systems over their authoritarian alternatives, and that "Today's backsliding is more likely to end in the spin of a Bolsonaro than the carnage of a Pinochet" (p. 218). Moreover, Przeworski (2019, p. 102) observes that "One should not draw inferences about the survival of democracy from answers to survey questions."

To overcome these and other contemporary challenges, some authors call for restoring or reviving liberal democratic values (Guriev & Treisman, 2022; Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Hacker & Pierson, 2020). Consistent with that objective, the poor performance in the 2022 midterm elections by Trump-endorsed Republican Party candidates seems to support Przeworski's (2019, p. 203) conjecture that the radical Right has already reached its peak. However, while the breakdown of democracy does seem unlikely, the underlying sources of discontent (especially socioeconomic inequality) remain. Thus, I will argue that new ideas such as libertarian social democracy are needed to defeat illiberal populism and other "morbid symptoms," and to spur a fourth wave of democratization.

Systemic Crisis and Critical Juncture

Taking a longer view of recent history, the current stagnation in the spread of democracy is nothing new. That is, just as there have been waves of democratization in the world, so too have there been counterwaves (Huntington, 1991). If the contemporary crisis of democracy reflects a third counterwave or even a more minor stagnation, liberal democracy is likely to be restored in the decades ahead (as Fukuyama's "End of History" thesis predicts – more on this below). More generally, "crises may entrench old orthodoxies, rather than lead to their being replaced" (Dodds, 2018, p. 100). However, the confluence of the aforementioned political, economic, and cultural crises (or quasi-crises) may also be indicative of something more historically significant: a critical juncture, and with it an opportunity for a fundamental paradigm shift.

Other authors seem to agree. For instance, Bookchin (2005, p. 13) described the current moment as "the greatest turning point in history." Political scientist Manfred Steger (2013, p. 136), discussing the current state of neoliberal globalization, observes that "Humanity has reached yet another critical juncture – the most important in the relatively short existence of our species." Similarly, at *Democracy Now's* 20th anniversary celebration on December 5th, 2016, Amy Goodman referred to a

"critical juncture in US history and the world."[33] In *The End of Protest*, Micah White (2016, p. 256) writes, "You are in one of those magical moments of revolutionary possibility." Also, in his book *Anarchy Alive!*, Uri Gordon (2008, p. 164) concludes that, "humanity is in a unique moment of critical instability, a 'bifurcation point' where a phase-passage can take place from one pattern of dynamic equilibrium to another."

It is plausible that the current crises of neoliberalism and liberal democracy are, taken together, indicative of a more general critical juncture and/or an interregnum moment (in Antonio Gramsci's sense of the term[34]). Given the current circumstances, "There's never been a more urgent time for revolution" (Laursen, 2021, p. 227). However, an "intellectually coherent alternative paradigm" has not yet emerged, as far as we can tell (Hunt & Stanley, 2019). Przeworski (2019, p. 206), for instance, "[does] not see what would get us out of the current discontent." I turn next to a discussion of libertarian social democracy, which, I will argue, has the potential to become the new paradigm.[35]

1.4 Libertarian Social Democracy (and Its Alternatives)

Toward a New Paradigm

Socioeconomic Inequality and Opportunity for Change

A likely cause of the current systemic crisis is the rise in socioeconomic inequality coinciding with the period of neoliberal globalization. Supporters of neoliberal globalization, informed by comparative advantage theory and emphasizing the benefits of modernization, sometimes remind us that millions of people have been lifted out of poverty since the neoliberal era took root in the 1980s. However, in most countries, the gap in income between those at the top and those at the bottom of the distribution has grown substantially in recent decades. On average, wages have been stagnating and economic insecurity rising in the United States, as well as other countries in Europe and Japan (Reich, 2015, p. 167). As Volcano and Shannon (2012, p. 86) observe, "people are either precariously employed or under- or unemployed, and people have a direct interest in understanding alternatives to

[33] Democracy Now. (2016, December 5). *Watch Democracy Now!'s 20th Anniversary Celebration* [Video]. https://www.democracynow.org/live/democracy_now_s_20th_anniversary_celebration

[34] Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci's famous definition of crisis, found in his *Prison Notebooks* (1929–35), reads: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."

[35] Other alternative paradigms have also been developed, such as democratic socialism as described by Thomas Piketty in *Capital and Ideology* (2020), participatory economics as described by Michael Albert in *Practical Utopia* (2017), and libertarian socialism as described by Tom Wetzel in *Overcoming Capitalism* (2022).

capitalism." Like the aforementioned crises, the current context of socioeconomic inequality may create an opportunity for radical reform (Reich, 2015, p. 184).

Post-modern Politics and the Need for New Left Ideas

In 1944, economic historian Karl Polanyi described the changes brought about by the industrial revolution in *The Great Transformation*. In the 1970s, there began a second great transformation in the western world from a modern class-based society to a post-modern knowledge-based one (Magone, 2019, p. 89). Amidst this more recent transformation, there has been a shift from the earlier class cleavage of the modern era, toward a post-modern cleavage pitting urban, left-leaning advocates of globalism (multi-culturalist) against rural, right-leaning advocates of nationalism (uni-culturalist). Cutting across this new left-right divide is an establishment-populist divide, with new populist parties emerging on both the left and right sides of the spectrum in many countries.[36]

In the United States, for example, at the time of this writing (in mid-2022) most of the Democratic Party represents the multicultural left-establishment quadrant, while a small minority including Bernie Sanders and "the Squad" represent the multicultural left-populist space. Within the Republican Party, a small minority such as Liz Cheney and Mitt Romney represent the nationalistic right-establishment quadrant, while Donald Trump and most of the Republicans now represent the nationalist right-populist space. Libertarian social democracy (this book's argument) aligns more with left-wing than right-wing populism, given its support for an integrated mixed economy (see Chap. 3) and multiculturalism (see Chap. 4).

Thus far, at least in the West, the current window of opportunity for transformative change has been more effectively seized by the populist right, or "nationalist capitalists" as Franks (2020) refers to them. Peter Singer (1999, p. 276) cautioned that "If the left fails to provide rational, progressive solutions to the growing economic and social traumas, the extreme right will come up with reactionary and irrational ones." In a similar vein, Piketty (2020, p. 871) explains that "the disadvantaged classes felt abandoned by the social-democratic parties (in the broadest sense) and this sense of abandonment provided fertile ground for anti-immigrant rhetoric and nativist ideologies to take root." Moreover, Piketty warns that if we do not

[36] Some attempts to define populism have been made. For instance, Engler and Weisstanner (2021, p. 11) define right-populist parties as those "that promote a nativist and authoritarian political platform combined with a populist discourse dividing the society into the 'corrupt elite' and the 'pure people'." However, Piketty (2020, pp. 962–5) describes populism as "a loaded, totemic, and dangerously polysemic word" that we should avoid using. Indeed, the line between an elite and a populist is often blurry. For instance, Hacker and Pierson (2020, p. 5) use the term "plutocratic populism" to describe the Republican Party's "bitter brew of reactionary economic priorities and right-wing cultural and racial appeals."

address socioeconomic inequalities, "political conflict will inevitably center on questions of national identity and borders" (p. 679).[37]

Libertarian Social Democracy as an Alternative Paradigm

According to Ronald Inglehart (2018, p. 138), if the current high levels of economic inequality were reversed, "the long-term spread of democracy would probably resume." However, moving beyond the current impasse in the advancement of freedom and equality – including a fourth wave of democracy[38] – requires asking bigger paradigmatic questions such as What might replace liberal democracy? And, what might replace neoliberal globalization? Transformative change, rather than mere reformism, is proportional to the urgency of the current moment. This book makes a case for one such alternative, referred to as *libertarian social democracy*.[39] Libertarian social democracy prescribes transformative change in the three broad realms of social life – political, economic, and cultural – and reveals a new and uncharted frontier of social progress.

In the political realm, libertarian social democracy promotes an alternative to liberal democracy: an egalitarian democratic transitionary state capable of facilitating further progress toward equal liberty.[40] In the economic realm, libertarian social democracy offers an alternative to polarized thinking on markets and socialism,

[37] An empirical study by Engler and Weisstanner (2021) concludes that growth in support for radical right parties in recent years has been driven more by subjective social status (i.e., the level of social respect people believe they are entitled to) than by income inequality itself. From that perspective, income inequality sets the stage for radical right support by increasing the gap between low and high perceived social statuses, in turn leading the natives (with higher perceived status) to seek protection with radical right parties who focus on cultural issues and pledge to maintain the natives' social status.

[38] The first three (modern) waves of democratization (reviewed above) involved transitions from authoritarian to democratic political systems. A "fourth wave of democracy", as I envision it, would involve a new wave of transitions from authoritarianism to democracy following a revolutionary transformation in the US from liberal to egalitarian democracy.

[39] The terms *libertarian* and *anarchist* are treated as synonymous in this study, unless otherwise noted. This is in-line with Graham's (2015, pp. 5–6, 52) observation that, "Long before advocates of laissez-faire capitalism began identifying themselves as 'libertarian' around the mid-twentieth century, anarchists had already been calling themselves libertarians as early as Joseph Déjacque in the 1850s."

[40] In this book I emphasize a binary distinction between liberal and egalitarian democracy. While this is true in the US (the primary focus of this book), in a broader comparative perspective these categories are not mutually exclusive. Some countries are both egalitarian *and* liberal democracies (e.g., Sweden). When I distinguish liberal from egalitarian democracy, the term liberal democracy is implicitly referring to both liberal democratic political systems (universal suffrage, free and fair party competition, and constitutional rights) as well as the inequalities associated with (classic) liberal economic ideas. Thus, although I will contrast liberal from egalitarian democracy (for simplicity), a cleaner distinction would be between *neo*liberal and egalitarian democracy ("neoliberal democracy" capturing liberal politics as well as the inequalities of neoliberal economics). I will remind the reader of this wrinkle in a Chap. 8 footnote.

promoting instead a libertarian mixed economy that aims to balance property rights against positive rights to a basic set of public goods and services.[41] In the cultural realm, there would be a new understanding of and genuine support for freedom and equality, ideas reflected in cultural norms as well as new political and economic institutions. The following three chapters will focus on transformative change within those realms.

Anarchist Engagements with State Politics

Prefigurative Anarchism

Consistent with Errico Malatesta's statement that "Anarchism is the method by which to achieve anarchy" (Malatesta, 2015, p. 13), *anarchism* is here understood as the means while *anarchy* is understood as the end – the elimination of state power and other forms of domination.[42] The term *prefiguration* as currently used by anarchists, stems from discussions in Western academia about the New Left movements of the 1960s (Raekstad & Gradin, 2020, p. 8). However, a commitment to prefiguration has been more-or-less central to anarchist thinking at least since the writing of Mikhail Bakunin (Wilson, 2011).[43] Raekstad and Gradin (2020, p. 10) define prefigurative politics as "the deliberate experimental implementation of desired future social relations and practices in the here-and-now." One of the implications of prefigurative anarchism is a more-or-less strict prohibition on instrumental uses of state power. Instead, anarchists have generally sought to prefigure non-domination within

[41] In the economic realm, *social democracy* is often viewed as a more moderate idea combining capitalism with a robust welfare state. For instance, according to Przeworski (1991, p. 132), "The fundamental premise of social democracy is that nationalization of the means of production is not necessary to overcome the irrationality of capitalism." For Piketty (2020, p. 487), the term social democracy describes "a set of political practices and institutions whose purpose was to socially embed (in Polanyi's sense) private property and capitalism." My use of the term social democracy aligns with its more radical early usage (for instance, by Rosa Luxembourg) as an egalitarian socialist system with a vast public economic sphere.

[42] Ben Franks (2020) notes that anarchist opposition will tend to target the major sources of oppression, whether that be the bureaucratic state, economic class, racism, patriarchy, et cetera. The related topic of intersectionality is discussed in Chap. 4.

[43] I use the term "traditional anarchism" in reference to anarchism since it arose as a social movement in the nineteenth century, emphasizing the prefigurative strategy found in both individualist and collectivist traditions. While prefiguration has been more-or-less central to anarchist theory and praxis (see Chap. 2), there have been some important changes in anarchism over the years. For instance, two events in the early twentieth century – Kropotkin's support for the Allied powers in World War I, and the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia in 1917 – generated a rift between pacifists and insurrectionary anarchists (Kinna, 2019a, pp. 128–9). Also, according to Uri Gordon (2008, p. 5), "the roots of today's anarchist networks can be found in the processes of intersection and fusion among radical social movements since the 1960s, whose paths had never been overtly anarchist."

autonomous zones, syndicalist unions, worker cooperatives, or groups engaged in some direct action or mutual aid effort.

Traditionally, anarchists have welcomed the benefits of political reforms and may even seek to pressure lawmakers through protests, strikes, or direct action. Anarchists such as Errico Malatesta welcomed concessions from political elites so long as such reforms were not achieved through direct involvement in state politics (see Ferretti et al., 2020, p. 144). More recently, some authors have added some nuance to this limit of anarchist praxis. Franks (2020), for instance, argues that anarchism can also include some minor forms of constitutional or electoral engagement, under three conditions: (i) such acts yield a higher level of political equality than their alternatives, (ii) the tactic does not replace direct action, and (iii) the actor remains critical of the idea of representation itself.[44] Drawing upon insights from his experience as a local representative in Finland, Condit (2019, p. 38) explores the idea that municipal governance can contribute to anarchism. Meanwhile, Raekstad and Gradin (2020) suggest that prefigurative anarchism can be assisted by a revolutionary national government.

Gradualist Anarchism

There are some semantic wrinkles that should be addressed here to clearly distinguish my argument from those just mentioned. The anarchist approach described in this book, which I refer to simply as gradualist anarchism (itself part of the larger libertarian social democracy framework), is similar to the aforementioned arguments of Franks, Condit, and Raekstad and Gradin in that all seem open to the idea that elected representatives (or candidates) can potentially contribute to anarchist progress. To be clear, the term *gradualist anarchism* is used here in reference to anarchist approaches, which incorporate a conscious use of state power as an instrument of anarchist progress.

But are such statist contributions to anarchist progress part of anarchism proper (a more comprehensive understanding of anarchism, as argued in this book)? Or are such cases better understood as prefigurative anarchism being augmented by non-anarchist engagements with state politics? For Franks, anarchism is prefigurative by definition, but what counts as prefigurative is provided some wiggle room by his three aforementioned criteria. Raekstad and Gradin seem to agree with Franks that anarchism must be prefigurative but also suggest that governments can potentially contribute to anarchist efforts. Condit seems open to the idea that regular participation in *municipal* governance can be a part of anarchism. The gradualist argument presented in this book calls for a more comprehensive understanding of anarchism, which explicitly incorporates a role for statist politics. Such an approach resembles

[44] Similar to what Franks (2020) refers to as constitutional engagement, or what Condit (2019) describes as the "ruling order," I use the following terms interchangeably: state-based politics, statist politics, state politics, and establishment politics.

Condit's openness to the potential role of municipal representatives in promoting anarchism but is generalized to allow for state-based contributions at all levels.

In-line with Franks' first criterion of anarchism (that anarchist praxis must be political equality maximizing), it is here argued that a particular praxis can be considered anarchist if it maximizes freedom and equality – or, *equal liberty*, more tersely.[45] That is the sole criterion used here to distinguish anarchist from non-anarchist praxis. By that minimal standard, even if involvement in state politics violates Franks' third criterion (remaining critical of representation), such a strategy can still be deemed consistent with anarchism if it is equal liberty maximizing.

But when might participation in state politics do more to advance equal liberty than a strictly prefigurative approach (and thus be viewed as part of anarchism, by my standard)? To answer that question, I stress a simple binary distinction between egalitarian and class-based societies. On the one hand, in an unequal democracy (that is, a democracy with a ruling class), outsider tactics (including but not limited to prefigurative action[46]) will do more to advance equal liberty than direct engagements with state politics. On the other hand, after a successful social revolution (achieving, in the economic realm, an egalitarian or post-class society[47]), instrumental uses of state power may be more effective than strictly prefigurative anarchism at promoting equal liberty, and thus become available as an anarchist strategy.[48]

Simply put, the argument presented here challenges the idea that anarchism must be prefigurative. Instead, it is argued that anarchist strategy spans a continuum from prefigurative to gradualist (as defined above). Thus, on the one hand, this book's argument is less strict than current understandings of anarchism, allowing not only some exceptions or nuance to prefigurative politics, but rather a role for state-based politics on par with prefiguration in a more comprehensive anarchist framework, *in an egalitarian democracy*. On the other hand, this book's argument is even stricter

[45] The terms *freedom* and *liberty* are used interchangeably in this book. Thus, for instance, the terms *freedom and equality* and *equal liberty* both mean liberty enjoyed by all, rather than at the expense of one another. These terms are further explained in Chap. 2.

[46] *Outsider tactics* (discussed in Chap. 8) refers to those types of activism beyond the scope of state politics. This includes prefigurative actions such as contributions to mutual aid efforts or participation in autonomous zones. However, outsider tactics might also include mass demonstrations, strikes, or other types of direct action, which do not necessarily aim to prefigure longer-term anarchist organizational forms.

[47] In this book, I use the terms *egalitarian* and *post-class* interchangeably. Similarly, according to Albertus and Menaldo (2018, p. 117), "Egalitarian democracy is operative when the rights and freedoms of individuals are protected equally across all social groups and resources are also distributed equally across social groups." The meaning of egalitarianism is discussed in Chap. 7.

[48] In such cases, whether we refer to instrumental uses of state power as properly anarchist (as I do), "anarchistic," or non-anarchist, may be more semantically than substantively important. That is, if I was to describe such instrumental uses of state power as "anarchistic" or non-anarchist, my argument might bear a stronger resemblance to that of Franks, Condit, and Raekstad and Gradin without losing much of its theoretical impact. However, I argue that the more holistic understanding of anarchism advanced here is not only conceptually valid, but also imbues anarchism with greater potential to become a new cultural paradigm at the societal level (see Chap. 2 for more on this point).

than Franks' in its prohibition on instrumental uses of state power, *in an unequal democracy* (e.g., the USA today).[49]

The Ontological Question

This brings me to what I will call anarchism's ontological question: Can states be used *consciously* as instruments for anarchist progress, or is this contrary to the very definition of anarchism?[50] I emphasize the word consciously because, as many anarchists will already acknowledge, democratizing states have already served as *unwitting* vehicles for anarchist progress in the modern era. That is, when state actors offer concessions in the context of an elite-mass bargaining interaction, they become unwitting catalysts of progress toward a free and equal society. Indicative of this unwitting characteristic, Price (2013, p. 90) observes that "Every expansion of democratic rights was won by the blood of the people fighting the capitalists, even the most basic freedoms were concessions forced upon the ruling class." By contrast, it is here argued that state power can be consciously used as an instrument of anarchism following a successful social revolution.[51]

Below, I will aim to demonstrate that the gradualist anarchist vision described in Part I of this book is ontologically separable from other ideological perspectives, especially liberalism and Marxism – two worldviews which libertarian social democracy (the perspective advanced in this book) bears the closest resemblances

[49] In this book, I stress a binary distinction between unequal and egalitarian democracy and argue that activists should rely primarily on "outsider" revolutionary strategy in an unequal context (argued in Part II). That tidy distinction works best within the context of the United States, which is my primary focus in this book. However, in a broader comparative perspective, the more fundamental determinant of reformist vs. revolutionary strategy is not inequality per se, but rather the degree of pluralism in a democratic capitalist society (specifically, the influence of an independent socialist party or movement). While elite-class control will tend to be more total in an unequal democracy (the United States being an archetype in this regard), others have influential socialist parties and are thus unequal *and* pluralist democracies. Examples include Latin American countries today, as well as Western countries during the first liberal era (late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries). Thus, in Chap. 8, I will clarify that reformism may be equal liberty maximizing in an unequal democracy if there is still an independent and influential socialist movement.

[50] According to Thomas Nail (2019, p. 32), "Ontological anarchism is the philosophical position that there is no absolute law, ruler or origin of being – from the Greek word αναρχια, *anarchía*, 'without ruler' or 'without origin'." This does not seem to be in tension with my use of the term ontological. That is, by addressing anarchism's ontological question (as just described), I will aim to demonstrate that gradualist anarchism (as defined above) is essentially different from liberalism and Marxism and is equal liberty maximizing.

[51] As will be explained in Part I, the success of libertarian social democracy may require transformative change in the political, economic, and/or cultural realms, as needed in a particular context. I am here focusing primarily on transformative change in the economic realm (i.e., achieving an egalitarian distribution of wealth) as this creates the potential for states to be used as instruments of anarchism. In turn, culture will determine if the political will to pursue equal liberty exists, and political institutions will affect the ease with which cultural preference can be translated into equal liberty maximizing policy.

to. Drawing perfectly clear distinctions between alternative ideologies can be challenging. For instance, although the prefigurative principle has traditionally provided a bright line separating anarchism from Marxism, "There are strands of autonomist Marxism which interpret Marxism in a libertarian, anti-statist fashion which overlaps with class struggle anarchism" (Price, 2012, p. 315). Nevertheless, one must attempt to identify points of mutual exclusivity between social visions, as Graham (2015, p. 3) explains:

> In order to determine whether someone's views, or a movement, can be described as 'anarchist', […o]ne must come up with some identifying or defining characteristics of anarchist doctrines and movements that distinguish them from other ideas and movements.

Traditionally, prefigurative anarchism has the advantage of offering a clear and simple distinction from other ideologies: Its more-or-less strict prohibition on the use of state power. By contrast, if we explicitly allow anarchism to include instrumental uses of state power (even in a post-class setting), we risk conflating anarchism with other ideologies such as Marxism or political liberalism. My response can be summarized as follows. Like prefigurative anarchism, gradualist anarchism can also be clearly distinguished from liberalism and Marxism, albeit via a less succinct two-step demarcation: First, unlike political liberalism, libertarian social democracy (including gradualist anarchism) recognizes that equal liberty cannot be fully achieved without radical decentralization (i.e., a "withering away of the state"). Second, it can be distinguished clearly from Marxism by its strict adherence to democratic modes of politics in the public sphere. I will now attempt to demonstrate that these are differences of kind, not degrees.

Libertarian Social Democracy Versus Political Liberalism

Similarities with Liberalism and/or Republicanism[52]

Libertarian social democracy (and the idea of gradualist anarchism subsumed by it) is similar to political liberalism in ways.[53] For instance, in the political realm, libertarian social democracy bears some resemblances to the social contract philosophy

[52] In this part of the chapter, I will bundle together political liberalism and republicanism, emphasizing, for instance, how both see the sovereign state as a permanent fixture of contemporary society. This is not to say that there are no differences between them. For instance, according to Ansell and Torfing (2021, p. 242), from the liberal perspective, citizenship imparts a set of civil, political, and social rights. By contrast, from the republican perspective, citizenship includes individual rights as well as community obligations.

[53] I use the term *political liberalism* in reference to liberal ideas and/or schools of thought focusing on the political realm, such as social liberalism and liberal republicanism. Political liberals tend to favor liberal democracy, as defined earlier in this Introduction. By contrast, I will use the term *economic liberalism* in reference to liberal ideas and/or schools of thought focusing primarily on the economic realm, especially neoliberal, neoclassical, public choice, right-wing libertarian, and market anarchist. For example, in his 1962 book *Capitalism and Freedom*, Milton Friedman

of John Rawls, himself influenced by the ideas of Rousseau and Kant.[54] Like this book's argument, Rawls's theory of justice emphasizes the primacy of equal liberty and accepts the role of state power in achieving that goal. Also like Rawls' theory, I will occasionally use the term "veil of ignorance" to capture the idea of prioritizing the public good over one's private interest. Other points of tangency between this book's argument and political liberalism (broadly defined) include the Kantian and Hegelian idea that freedom derives from just laws we give to ourselves (what I call *self-government*), an emphasis on democratic political institutions within a single polity or "demos," and a normative emphasis on collective security in international relations (see Chap. 4).

Differences from Liberalism: Equality

On the other hand, while it is true that "Anarchists need not balk at affinity with liberalism" (Condit, 2019, p. 152), we must also be able to clearly distinguish the two. One difference between libertarian social democracy and liberalism concerns socioeconomic inequality. As Sigman and Lindberg (2019, p. 597) observe, "Liberal democracy does not […] require equality *per se*, but rather the protection of *inequalities* that were seen [by classic liberals such as John Locke] as a 'natural' part of society. This perspective has formed the basis of the liberal perspective that inequality, particularly economic inequality, is not fundamentally inimical to democracy." By contrast, the democratic transitionary state (part of libertarian social democracy, as explained in Chap. 2), while permitting some inequality, would necessarily be egalitarian (that is, without socioeconomic classes), as concentrated wealth will tend to bias political processes and outcomes, undermining the potential use of states as instruments of anarchism.[55]

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described his viewpoint as liberalism, referring to its classical nineteenth century form (Wetzel, 2022, p. 22). Classical liberalism straddles political and economic liberalism, emphasizing transitions from absolutist monarchy to republicanism in the political realm, and from mercantilism to laissez faire capitalism in the economic realm.

[54] In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls (1971, p. 225) identifies the connection between the ideas of Rousseau and Kant in the following statement: "Kant's main aim is to deepen and to justify Rousseau's idea that liberty is acting in accordance with a law that we give ourselves. And this leads not to a morality of austere command but to an ethic of mutual respect and self-esteem." Rawls, in turn, builds on Kant's philosophy, as suggested, for instance, in Rawls's following statement: "The notion of the veil of ignorance is implicit, I think, in Kant's ethics" (p. 121).

[55] Of course, liberals do not necessarily overlook the problem of wealth inequality. For instance, Rawls (1971, pp. 198–9) laments that, "Disparities in the distribution of property and wealth that far exceed what is compatible with political equality have generally been tolerated by the legal system."

Differences from Liberalism: Decentralization

The more essential distinction between libertarian social democracy and political liberalism concerns decentralization and the "withering away of the state." Various types of liberalism and/or republicanism seem to accept the state as essential to a free society.

Evidence of this can be found in the early modern ideas of Immanuel Kant and Georg Hegel. Both authors advanced the idea that freedom involves abiding by just laws we give to ourselves (what I will call *self-government*). However, like subsequent liberal and republican authors, Hegel and Kant did not, to my knowledge, advance a vision of progressive decentralization (what I will call *autonomy*).

From the classic liberal perspective, "governments are instituted to protect the natural rights of individuals [and] lose claim to obedience when they invade or destroy these rights" (Dewey, 2000 [1935], p. 16). In the American Declaration of Independence, an iconic example of classic liberal doctrine, a need for government to "secure their lives and liberties" is recognized. According to Wayne Price (2020, p. 194), "the original liberals concluded, logically, if society is to hold together at all, there needs to be a state, a strong (Leviathan) state or at least a minimal one." Consistent with this observation, Held (1987, p. 43) identifies a model of "protective democracy," associated with liberal authors such as John Locke and John Stuart Mill, which "emphasized the centrality of democratic institutions to safeguard the governed from tyranny of all kinds." Thus, from Locke's perspective, "the integrity and ultimate ends of society require a constitutional state in which 'public power' is legally circumscribed and divided" (Held, 1987, p. 53). According to Held (1987, p. 67), "These ideas were at the core of nineteenth-century English liberalism."

After the turn of the twentieth century, social liberals also seemed wedded to the idea that a state would always be needed to maximize equal liberty. As Wolin (2008, p. 270) explains in his discussion of US politics: "among liberals in the first half of the twentieth century one of the main justifications had been that only a strong, centralized government could effectively control corporate monopolies, punish corporate misbehavior, and promote social welfare." According to John Rawls (sometimes described as a social liberal), "The government's right to maintain public order and security is an enabling right, a right which the government must have if it is to carry out its duty of impartially supporting the conditions necessary for everyone's pursuit of his interests and living up to his obligations as he understands them" (Rawls, 1971, p. 187).[56] As another example, sociologist Franz Oppenheimer (a self-described liberal) argued that "No great society can exist without a body which renders final decisions on debatable issues and has the means, in case of emergency, to enforce the decisions" (quoted in Kinna, 2019a, pp. 202–3).

[56] Corroborating this understanding of Rawls, Amartya Sen (2009, p. 25) refers to "the Hobbesian – and Rawlsian – claim that we need a sovereign state to apply the principles of justice through the choice of a perfect set of institutions." To the extent that liberals view this need for a sovereign state as an immutable fact of life, it departs from libertarian social democracy.

The republican vision advanced by Philip Pettit (2014, p. 23) in *Just Freedom* – itself resembling constitutional liberalism or "what is usually described as liberalism in North America" – includes a non-tyrannical state as a permanent fixture in a free society. As Pettit (2014, pp. 157–8) explains, "I ignore the possibility of a stateless world on the grounds […] that there is no real possibility of establishing social justice without relying on the coercive power with which the state, as a functional necessity, imposes laws." While Pettit's constitutional republic bears several similarities to the democratic transitionary state (which I will describe in Chap. 2), libertarian social democracy places a stronger normative emphasis on decentralization (as well as the potential role of social revolution) in the advancement of equal liberty.

In contrast to these politically liberal and/or republican views, libertarian social democracy (and gradualist anarchism, more specifically) (i) recognizes that equal liberty cannot be fully realized even under a just state and, crucially, (ii) is willing to bear the risks of decentralization in pursuit of a fuller realization of equal liberty. Even if liberalism recognizes point (i), it is too risk-averse to embrace point (ii). Indeed, as Paul Goodman observed, "Decentralizing has its risks" (Stoer, 1994, p. 153). Political decentralization is risky in that we cannot know in advance whether such a transition will yield a net gain in equal liberty.

According to Treisman (2007, p. 282), where prerequisites for successful decentralization such as the rule of law are found at the local level, they are also likely to be found at the central level, in which case, "The obvious question is why – if such a sophisticated, capable, and benevolent central government exists – one needs to decentralize at all." While the empirical outcomes from decentralization can be either good or bad (Treisman, 2007), decentralization's *inherent* contribution to equal liberty can potentially outweigh any negative empirical outcomes. Thus, the key question is: When will decentralization yield a net gain in equal liberty? (This tradeoff is further discussed in Chap. 2).

In sum, libertarian social democracy can be distinguished teleologically (that is, with regard to its long-term objectives) from liberalism by the former's normative commitment to a fuller realization of equal liberty and, more essentially, its willingness to decentralize power, even under good government, to achieve that end. In other words, libertarian social democracy can be demarcated from liberalism by the former's willingness to dissolve central government – the "protective and empowering force field" of the state (Pettit, 2014, p. 25) – and thus bear the social risks associated with pursuing equal liberty at a deeper level.[57] Under libertarian social democracy, the democratic transitionary society would be more inclined than liberal

[57] Roughly corresponding to this argument, Condit (2019, p. 181) explains that, "Anarchism does not renounce most of the liberties achieved by liberalism, or their potentiality for generating ethically justifiable community. But it denies their sufficiency, coherence and in some cases, structural forms, if their consequence is suppression of more fundamental modes of individuality and communality."

societies to take such risks.[58] This decentralization-based distinction from liberalism has implications regarding philosophy of history as well, a topic which I return to following my discussion of Marxism.

Libertarian Social Democracy Versus Marxism

Similarity and Difference

One of the primary revolutionary objectives of libertarian social democracy is to break up the power of the ruling class, redistribute its wealth, and usher in an egalitarian (i.e., post-class) society. This objective is more-or-less in line with class struggle leftism, whether of the Marxian or anarchist variety.[59] However, the essential difference between libertarian social democracy and Marxism (and to some extent class struggle anarchism) is the former's normative commitment to democratic political processes. I begin with a look at the Marxian theory of the state, which will help to clarify this difference.

The Marxian Theory of the State

The Marxist argument that a proletariat dictatorship is needed to achieve libertarian communism flows from the view that the state will tend to be dominated by whichever class controls the means of production. As Graeber and Wengrow (2021, p. 360) explain, "Marxists suggested that states make their first appearance in history to protect the power of an emerging ruling class. As soon as one has a group of

[58] While full decentralization (to the individual level) clearly enhances individual autonomy, it is less obvious why middling steps, say from the national to the state level within the USA, enhances autonomy (aside from being "a step closer" to full decentralization). For instance, Gordon (2008, p. 155) observes that "the number of states in the world adds or subtracts nothing from anarchists' assessment of how closely the world corresponds to their ideals." On the other hand, Condit (2019, p. 192) argues that the municipality is "closer to citizens than the state, more accessible to participation on reasonably sustainable terms."

Focusing on substantive representation, I will recast the question as follows: Why is choosing a leader at a sub-national level more conducive to individual autonomy than choosing a leader at the national level? Consistent with Madison's observation from *Federalist 10* that "The smaller the society, the fewer probably will be the distinct parties and interests composing it," I assume less variance in the ideological distribution of the average sub-national unit than at the national level. If so, the average ideological distance between representative and citizen will be smaller at the sub-national level as well. At the local extreme, each citizen represents him/herself (i.e., direct democracy).

[59] To some extent, the class struggle aspect of anarchism had already declined in the United States amidst the shift in the anarchist movement from class struggle to counterculture after World War II (Williams, 2018, p. 25). However, based on what I've observed (e.g., on social media), the class struggle influence on the anarchist movement seems to remain predominant, or at least the outlook held by a large plurality of anarchists.

people living routinely off the labour of another, the argument ran, they will necessarily create an apparatus of rule, officially to protect their property rights, in reality to preserve their advantage."

In Marxian terminology, politics is part of the "superstructure," which is itself rooted in the economic "base" of a society (that is, the prevailing mode of production, whether capitalist or socialist). Thus, in *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx wrote that "Political power, properly so-called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another" (quoted in Held, 1987, p. 123). Thus, for Marx, class struggle was the engine of dialectical materialism.

Consistent with this understanding of state power, Marxists (and to some extent, class struggle anarchists[60]) tend to view liberal democratic rights as biased in favor of the bourgeoisie, or even fictitious (Blackledge, 2010). According to Lenin, "As long as capitalist property exists universal suffrage is an instrument of the bourgeois state" (quoted in Przeworski, 1991, p. 41).[61] As Przeworski (2019, p. 134) explains, "Communists derided democracy as a mask over the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (Lenin 1919) and fought to replace it by a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' led by a single party." Given such perspectives, "It is hard to resist the view that implicit in this [Marxist] position is a propensity to an authoritarian form of politics" (Held, 1987, pp. 137–8). Indeed, some have argued that Marx never advocated direct (i.e., bottom-up) democracy, even in his most democratic writings on the Paris Commune of 1871 (Price, 2020, p. 194).[62]

According to Albertus and Menaldo (2018, p. 4), "Marx believed that the only way to prevent the bourgeoisie from reasserting themselves at the expense of workers was through an empowered proletariat that did not have to bother with the rule of law (a 'dictatorship of the proletariat')." Similarly, some class struggle anarchists have agreed that "working people need to stop thinking in terms of social fictions like 'rights' and make war with capital and the state" (Shannon, 2012, p. 287).[63] If

[60] For example, coming from a libertarian socialist perspective, Wetzel (2022, p. 101) asserts that "Class oppression is in the State's DNA."

[61] While Marxists argue that democracies will tend to be biased in favor of the bourgeoisie, neoclassical public choice perspectives contend, to the contrary, that democracies will tend to be used by majorities seeking to infringe on the property rights of entrepreneurs for their own narrow advantage without regard to ethical principles. From either perspective, the possibility that democracy can be sustainably used in an unbiased way on behalf of the public good in deemed unrealistic. These concerns are addressed in Chap. 3.

[62] Not all Marxists have supported centralized state power. As Raekstad and Gradin (2020, p. 25) explain, "Strands of Left Marxism, including the work of Rosa Luxemburg, council communists, and autonomous Marxists, have advocated prefigurative politics in various forms, often along with rejecting state participation." However, such perspectives are here viewed as contrary to a more orthodox interpretation of Marxism according to which the state must be used as an instrument of class struggle by the proletariat to achieve libertarian communism.

[63] Of course, not all class struggle anarchists discount the idea of individual rights. For instance, Nestor Mahkno's *Organizational Platform* includes an "acknowledgement of individuals' rights and duties" (Kinna, 2019a, p. 194). More generally, the class struggle left perspective can be interpreted not as one of opposition to rights per se but rather skepticism about the potential for rights to be equally upheld in a class-based system. A similarity between Marxism and class struggle

the Marxian view (that states will tend to be "class states") is correct, a democratic transitionary state could not be used as an instrument for anarchist progress, as it would tend toward a dictatorship of one class or the other.[64] Thus, the essential distinction between libertarian social democracy and Marxism derives from a disagreement over the potential for an unbiased democratic political system.[65]

Evidence Favoring the Marxian View

One of Marx's basic predictions was that, under capitalism, there would be a tendency toward wealth accumulation (Price, 2013, p. 75). Recent developments during the neoliberal era seem to confirm the Marxian prediction that liberal democratic politics will tend to exhibit a right-wing bias and that socioeconomic inequality will increase, ultimately serving the interests of the capitalist class. For instance, during the "heyday of so-called 'Third Way' of centrist politics" (Dodds, 2018, p. 119), many traditionally center-left parties, such as the British Labour Party under Tony Blair, and the US Democratic Party under Bill Clinton, adopted many of the neoliberal policies advocated by their conservative predecessors (Tormey, 2015, p. 147).

According to Domhoff (2006, p. 14), since the 1980s, the increasingly concentrated distribution of wealth and income in the USA indicates that "the upper class and corporate community have gained increasing power over the liberal-labor coalition." Consistent with that observation, recent empirical studies have found that US political representatives have become more responsive to the wealthy and elites than to average citizens (Bartels, 2008; Hayes, 2013; Gilens & Page, 2014).

Even in Sweden, a more egalitarian democracy (Sigman & Lindberg, 2019, Fig. 3), the state has acted to repress democratic movements in marginalized

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anarchism exists where advocates of the latter also oppose free and fair competition among political parties from across the spectrum.

[64] While Marxists have traditionally held that a proletariat dictatorship could eventually lead to libertarian communism, after the class struggle is won, it is that procedural aspect – relying on dictatorial rather than democratic politics – that differentiates Marxism from libertarian social democracy. As an anarchist argument, libertarian social democracy insists that equal liberty must be maximized in the political procedure as well as the outcome. Implicit in this argument is the assertion that, while a dictatorship cannot be expected to wither away, a democratic transitionary state can potentially do so under the right conditions.

[65] One can find aspects of democratic politics in Marx's thought. For example, Marx wanted the First International "to sponsor workers' parties throughout Europe, to run for government offices" (Price, 2013, p. 155). However, this was intended as a means to socialist dictatorship of the proletariat, which Marx clearly favored. For instance, in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx observed that "Between capitalist and communist society lies a period of revolutionary transformation from one to the other. There is a corresponding period of transition in the political sphere and in this period the state can only take the form of a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat" (quoted in Price, 2013, p. 142). Libertarian Marxists interpret the "dictatorship of the proletariat" idea as the stateless rule of the self-organized working class (ibid, p. 143). Even so, this is undemocratic to the extent that free and fair competition between "mainstream" political parties (social democratic, liberal, and/or conservative) is repressed.

communities (Lundström, 2018). Meanwhile, "the influence of trade unions on policy-making at both the [European Union (EU)] level and within individual EU countries has decreased substantially over recent years" (Dodds, 2018, p. 154). Given such developments, it is perhaps not surprising that liberal capitalism has tended to produce increasing disparities in the accumulation of wealth (Piketty, 2014). Also, a 2017 World Inequality Report finds that "income inequality has increased in nearly every country around the world since 1980."[66]

Some Evidence That Class Bias Is Not Inevitable

In contrast to the Marxian view, libertarian social democracy contends that democratic political systems can provide unbiased forums for democratic deliberation and policy-making in the public (rather than a more narrow class) interest. Consistent with that argument, research shows that some democratic institutions have been more effective at resisting the recent trend toward inequality in liberal democracies (albeit still tending in that direction overall). For instance, since World War II polities with proportional systems of representation and multiparty systems have had higher rates of left-leaning governments and tended to redistribute a greater share of the nation's wealth to low-income groups than single-party governments in two-party systems (Iversen & Soskice, 2006).

From the end of World War II until the 1970s, at least, which political party was in power did seem to matter, in that "The greater the social democratic presence, the greater the amount of income that goes to the lower classes" (Domhoff, 2006, p. 14). Also, while income inequality has increased more-or-less across Western democracies during the neoliberal era, it has increased less in European countries than in the United States (Piketty, 2020, Fig. 10.5; Hacker & Pierson, 2020, Figs. 1 and 2). Even in the UK, "one of our main competitors for the title of most unequal democracy," the wealthiest households only own about half as large a share of national wealth as those in the USA (Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 57).

Thus, as Piketty (2020, p. 491) explains, "The European social-democratic model seems to offer greater protection than other models (especially the meager American social state) from the inegalitarian pressures of globalization at work since the 1980s." Consistent with this empirical variation, Piston (2018, p. 125) observes that, "some national governments do more than others to address economic inequality. Indeed, in many countries downward redistribution has increased at about the same pace as inequality." Such examples suggest that some democratic institutions are more conducive to egalitarianism than others.

[66] Alvaredo, F., et al. (2017, December 14). *Inequality is not inevitable – but the US "experiment" is a recipe for divergence*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/dec/14/inequality-is-not-inevitable-but-the-us-experiment-is-a-recipe-for-divergence

Prospects for Egalitarian Democracy After Neoliberalism

As was just emphasized, some democratic institutions appear to limit inequality more effectively than others. Moreover, such democracies have been able to limit inequality, despite the competitive pressures of neoliberal globalization to pursue liberal market reforms such as privatization and flexible labor market policies.[67] In Europe, during the three decades following World War II, Keynesian style mixed economies and generous social welfare programs were more possible in a context of greater national autonomy (from the pressures of liberal globalization) than during the post-industrial era beginning in the 1970s (Magone, 2019, p. 93). For example, EU fiscal rules now require that governments keep budget deficits below 3% and public debt below 60% of GDP.[68]

A new libertarian social democratic paradigm could moderate such international competitive pressures, allowing governments to recalibrate their balance between socialist and (economically) liberal policies, without resulting in the technological pessimist outcome (argued in Chap. 3). More generally, one might plausibly predict that, given an international paradigm shift (catalyzed by a successful social revolution in the United States, itself guided by the new ideational paradigm of libertarian social democracy), as well as proportional representation and multiparty democracy (combined with other well-informed institutional choices), the capitalist biases often exhibited by liberal democracies today could be neutralized.[69]

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[67] Between 1945 and 1975, many industrialized countries (especially those with major social democratic parties such as Sweden and Germany) had neo-corporatist interest group systems with regular tripartite bargaining between confederated labor unions, business organizations, and government representatives, over wages, welfare policies, and workers' rights. During that period, workers enjoyed favorable conditions such as long-term employment guarantees. However, beginning in the 1970s, the post-war economic booms ended, welfare state growth became unsustainable, and companies came under increasing pressure to compete internationally. To adjust to these new pressures, in countries such as Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, firms increasingly exited tripartite bargaining arrangements, encouraging enterprise-level bargaining instead. By 2005, a new "flexicurity" approach emphasizing employability over job security had developed across the European Union, according to which working age people would have five or six jobs throughout their lifetime instead of just one (Magone, 2019, pp. 352–3).

[68] Ilzetzki, E. (2021, June 10). *Fiscal rules in the European Monetary Union*. VoxEU. https://voxeu.org/article/fiscal-rules-european-monetary-union

[69] Asimakopoulos (2012, p. 153) reminds us that "capital will always have a built-in advantage under capitalism in that it owns the means of production." However, in Chap. 3 it will be argued that a properly balanced libertarian mixed economy, while challenging to achieve and sustain, will go a long way toward eliminating such a bias.

In Sum: Characteristics of an Anarchic State

Returning to the previous discussion about what counts as anarchism, a relevant question emerging from this discussion is: Can anarchism be understood holistically – with both bottom-up (prefigurative) and top-down (statist) components? Or, are top-down approaches inherently non-anarchist? I have thus far argued that the holistic (or comprehensive) view can be consistent with anarchist ontology. To be clear, the three characteristics of the anarchic state (envisioned by libertarian social democracy) correspond to the three realms of social life: an egalitarian (economic realm), democratic (political realm), and transitionary (cultural realm) state.

Of course, even states lacking those characteristics may promote (or, at least tolerate) prefigurative anarchist efforts at the grass-roots level. In such cases, anarchism is limited to the bottom-up prefigurative component, and the system as a whole can be described as an anarchist-nonanarchist hybrid. For instance, a politically authoritarian state might allow for (or even encourage, in the case of some Marxist states) prefigurative anarchist efforts.[70] Prefigurative anarchism might also be allowed and/or supported by some liberal,[71] or illiberal democratic states.[72]

But then, you might ask: If different types of states (both authoritarian and democratic) can promote prefigurative anarchism, why limit anarchists' participation and/or acceptance to the egalitarian democratic transitionary state (as I will argue)? My main response concerns the limits of equal liberty under non-anarchist states (i.e., those states without the characteristics of the egalitarian democratic transitionary state described in the next chapter). For example, a Marxist state might not be considered egalitarian in that the regime will tend to become a new type of ruling class.[73] A ruling class (whether Marxist or bourgeois) is unlikely to allow their own power and/or privilege to be withered away, thus limiting progress toward equal liberty. Acceptance of the state in such cases is not equal liberty maximizing (and thus not anarchist).

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[70] For example, the State of Venezuela can potentially help "support and grow the development of prefigurative institutions through things like legal recognition, protection, and financial support" (Raekstad & Gradin, 2020, p. 127).

[71] For example, collective ownership of the Christiania neighborhood in Denmark (an autonomous zone) was achieved in a 2012 deal with the City of Copenhagen (Nielsen, 2020, p. 146). Scandinavian countries such as Denmark are already more-or-less egalitarian and have political institutions (such as proportional representation) conducive to anarchism, but may not be fully anarchist in the cultural realm.

[72] For example, the autonomous zone of Cherán, in the state of Michoacán, Mexico, has received social assistance funding from the state and federal governments (Campbell, 2020, p. 175).

[73] For instance, not long after the 1917 Russian revolution, a new dominating class began to emerge consisting of "political apparatchiks, industrial managers, elite planners, and military brass" (Wetzel, 2022, p. 161). By the time of the Brezhnev era (1964–1982) in Russia, "It became evident that the revolutionary vision of an egalitarian classless society had given way to a society ruled by a privileged and self-perpetuating New Class, dominated by the Communist Party" (Inglehart, 2018, p. 159).

By contrast, the egalitarian democratic transitionary state can facilitate the full realization of equal liberty. Following a successful social revolution, the democratic transitionary state will be more conducive to equal liberty maximization than prefigurative anarchism alone, or an anarchist-nonanarchist hybrid. Following a successful social revolution, acceptance of the democratic transitionary state at the societal level will confer legitimacy on its institutions (a good thing, at that point),[74] and political participation will help ensure that public policies remain consistent with the elements of gradualist anarchism – just law, consensus, and decentralization (discussed in Chap. 2) – by countering the political influence of non-anarchist groups still represented in the assemblies after the revolution.

1.5 Philosophy of History

Framework for Analyzing History

Two Dimensions of History: Human Motivation and Teleology

When analyzing history, it is useful to distinguish between two key dimensions. One dimension concerns the teleology of history (that is, whether or not one sees history as tending toward some pre-determined endpoint[75]). This *teleological dimension* spans from structural determinism at one end (according to which history is driven by broader macro-level trends), to individual agency or freedom at the other (according to which we as individuals have the capacity to shape historical developments).

A second dimension (orthogonal to the aforementioned structure-agency dimension) concerns individual motives. This *human motives dimension* spans from material or economic interests at one end (according to which individuals are motivated primarily by their desire to maximize their own economic welfare), to cultural ideas at the other (according to which people are primarily motivated by goals such as mutual recognition or equal liberty, and different ideological perspectives on how to achieve such ends).

Between the poles of both spectrums are more agnostic and/or middling positions. Thus, on the teleological dimension, some may view history as driven by some mixture of structural factors and individual agency. As Graeber and Wengrow

[74] With regard to the meaning of the term *legitimacy*, I agree with Fukuyama (1992, p. 15) that, "Legitimacy is not justice or right in an absolute sense; it is a relative concept that exists in people's subjective perceptions."

[75] Bookchin (2005, p. 455) describes *teleology* as "the actualization of potentiality – more precisely, as the end result of a phenomenon's immanent striving toward realization that leaves room for the existence of fortuity and uncertainty." Adopting that definition, teleology is here understood as the end point of a weakly deterministic historical process driven by some blend of structural forces and individual agency (more on this below).

(2021, p. 206) observe, "precisely where one wishes to set the dial between freedom and determinism is largely a matter of taste." And, on the human motives dimension, some may view people as being guided by some balance of material as well as ideational motives. For instance, some have asserted, in contrast to Marxism, that ideas can shape economic interests, rather than vice versa (e.g., Piketty, 2020; Reagan, 2021).

Sources of Human Motivation: Plato's Tripartite Theory of the Soul

In his book *The End of History and the Last Man*, Francis Fukuyama (1992) presents a Universal History of mankind, building on Plato's tripartite theory of the soul, as well as the desire for recognition articulated in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.[76] The first part of the soul (as described by Fukuyama) is mankind's *desire* for material goods, roughly corresponding to our economic interests. The second part of the soul is *reason*, or how we pursue our economic interests, including natural science. According to Fukuyama, reason drives the accumulation of wealth and has led to the development of capitalist economic systems. The third part of the soul is *thymos*, which drives us to seek recognition and, according to Fukuyama, eventually resolves itself in liberal democracy, wherein each individual is a master of him or herself (more on this below). In the following discussion, I will translate desire and reason as the pursuit of economic or material interests, and *thymos* as cultural ideas such as equal liberty (or mutual recognition).

Do Teleological Views Promote State Power?

In their book *The Dawn of Everything*, Graeber and Wengrow (2021) reject linear (or "evolutionary") teleological views of history on the grounds that such perspectives promote an acceptance of state power as natural or inevitable. By the nineteenth century, evolutionary understandings of history saw a timeline of primary organizational units from band societies (hunter-gatherers), to tribes ('horticulturalists' without coercive power), to chiefdoms (kinship systems providing a basis for the rank, aristocracy, and even slavery), and then states (with intensive cereal agriculture, a legal monopoly on force, professional administration, and a complex division of labour) (ibid, p. 448). Such linear evolutionary views, Graeber and Wengrow argue, make the modern state appear logical or inevitable, in turn making it harder to dismantle. By contrast, I will argue that an evolutionary view of history does not uphold the state if its teleology truly transcends state power, as with libertarian social democracy (described below).

[76] According to Fukuyama (1992, p. 165), "Plato's *thymos* is nothing other than the psychological seat of Hegel's desire for recognition."

Locating Theories in the Two-Dimensional Space: Some Examples

Rational Choice Theory: Individual Agency Driven by Material (Individual) Interests

One theory (or rather, a broad category of theoretical perspectives) that views economic interests as paramount is rational choice theory. Such perspectives include what I will call economically liberal (i.e., pro-free market) perspectives such as the public choice school. However, in contrast to Marxism, rational choice theory emphasizes the primacy of the individual rather than aggregate class-based interests and falls on the individual agency side of the structure-agency teleological dimension. I will have more to say about rational choice theory (specifically, economically liberal perspectives) in Chap. 3.

Marx's Dialectical Materialism: History Driven by Material (Class) Interests

Another perspective that contends that individuals are driven more by economic or material interests than by thymotic ideas (such as a desire for mutual recognition) is Marxism. Marx's theory of dialectical materialism asserted that individuals are guided primarily by their socioeconomic class interests while discarding other motives (such as ideology) as "false consciousness." In contrast to rational choice theory, the Marxist perspective falls at the deterministic (structural) end of the teleological dimension, according to which class struggle propels history toward the end point of libertarian communism. As Graeber and Wengrow (2021, p. 446) explain: "Marxists concentrated on forms of domination, and the move out of primitive communism towards slavery, feudalism, and capitalism, to be followed by socialism (then communism)."

Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: History Driven by Desire for Recognition

A classic work emphasizing the importance of ideas (specifically, the desire for mutual recognition) is found in the parable of the master-slave relationship in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. There, Hegel speaks of "the self-defeating tendency of asymmetrical structures of recognition such as the master-slave relationship." For Hegel, "the struggle for recognition can find only one satisfactory solution, and that is a regime of *reciprocal* recognition among *equals*" (paraphrased by Markell, 2003, p. 3). Fukuyama, whose perspective I turn to next, interprets Hegel's deterministic perspective as tending toward a liberal democratic political constitution.

Fukuyama's Universal History: History Driven by Desire for Recognition (Toward Liberal Democracy)

In his book *The End of History and the Last Man*, Fukuyama (1992) presents a Universal History of mankind, building on Plato's theory of the soul and Georg Hegel's desire for recognition. According to Fukuyama, "For Hegel, the embodiment of human freedom was the modern constitutional state, or again, what we have called liberal democracy" (p. 60). Fukuyama thus argues that "the recognition provided by the contemporary liberal democratic state adequately satisfies the human desire for recognition" and therefore that History itself has reached its final stage (p. 207).

As evidence that the desire for recognition ultimately outweighs material interests, Fukuyama (1992, pp. xviii–xix) writes: "If people were nothing more than desire and reason, they would be content to live in market-oriented authoritarian states like Franco's Spain, or a South Korea or Brazil under military rule. But they also have a thymotic pride in their own self-worth, and this leads them to demand democratic governments that treat them like adults rather than children, recognizing their autonomy as free individuals."[77] However, Fukuyama (1992, p. 354) describes his Universal History as only *weakly deterministic*, meaning that, "in the face of broad historical trends, statesmanship, politics, leadership, and individual choice remain absolutely critical to the actual course of historical development." Thus, while history tends toward liberal democracy, this outcome is not inevitable.

This Book's Philosophy of History

Agreement and Difference with Fukuyama's Perspective

Like Fukuyama's Universal History, this book's libertarian social democratic philosophy of history views ideas (specifically the desire for mutual recognition or equal liberty) as a more powerful source of human motivation, ultimately, than material interests. Also like Fukuyama's perspective, this book's argument views history as tending toward a teleological endpoint (i.e., equal liberty maximization) and thus leans toward the deterministic (structural) end of the structure-agency dimension. However, unlike Fukuyama's perspective, it is here argued that the

[77] Making a similar point, Lawson (2019, p. 9) observes that "in many ways, revolutions appear to be irrational processes, motivated less by logics of expected utility than by a sense of collective outrage, hope, and solidarity." In addition to being recognized as free oneself, there is an apparent need to be recognized as virtuous toward others. Evidence includes the well-known "Hawthorn effect" in survey research, where direct interviewer contact increases pro-social responses on questions concerning generosity, willingness to cooperate, and tolerance. This phenomenon might be partially explained by material interests (e.g., concern that appearing intolerant will close off opportunities for beneficial cooperation). However, that might also be explained by a thymotic desire to be viewed as virtuous by others.

remaining shortcoming in political freedom associated with liberal democracy creates a potential contradiction that can propel mankind into a subsequent stage of history (referred to below as egalitarian democracy).

Motivational Dimension: The Ideational Influence of Republican Freedom

Living in a democratic polity, one encounters a basic tension between individual autonomy, on the one hand, and the need for collective, democratic decision-making on the other (Przeworski, 2019, p. 198). A useful distinction between liberalism and republicanism concerns their contrasting views on what it means to be free within such a context. While liberalism emphasizes the individual rights of the citizen (including the right to disengage from the community), republicanism emphasizes both individual rights and community obligations (Ansell & Torfing, 2021, p. 242). In other words, from the Republican perspective, we have an obligation to engage with the social affairs of our community (the *demos*), and such participation invigorates our freedom rather than undermining it.

A similar idea can be found in the writings of Enlightenment-era thinkers such as Rousseau (1712–78), Kant (1724–1804), and Hegel (1770–1831), as well as Rawls (1921–2002) more recently. According to Rousseau, individual autonomy and the collective are reconciled through the achievement of consensus (especially on the social contract), so that we are only forced to abide by laws we agree with. In turn, "Kant's main aim is to deepen and to justify Rousseau's idea that liberty is acting in accordance with a law that we give ourselves. And this leads not to a morality of austere command but to an ethic of mutual respect and self-esteem" (Rawls, 1971, p. 225). From both Kant and Hegel's perspective, "Human freedom emerges only when man is able to transcend his natural, animal existence, and to create a new self *for himself*" (Fukuyama, 1992, p. 152). This insight was later captured by Rawls' veil of ignorance analogy, according to which we develop our political preferences without knowledge of our own socioeconomic status, and thus prioritize the public good over our own self-interests.

In sum, the republican notion of freedom (according to which we are motivated by a thymotic desire for mutual recognition, rather than economic self-interest) can, at least in theory, spur historical progress toward equal liberty. While libertarian social democracy (this book's argument) disagrees with the liberal-republican view that states are needed to maximize equal liberty (as explained above), it agrees that thymotic ideas (specifically, the quest for mutual recognition, as implied by the republican notion of freedom), ultimately provide a more powerful individual motivation than economic self-interest. However, whether one acts on behalf of the greater good (as opposed to their own self-interest) ultimately remains a choice.

Teleological Dimension: History Tends Toward Equal Liberty Maximization

Like Fukuyama's Universal History, the philosophy of history underpinning this book's argument can also be described as *weakly deterministic*, emphasizing both deterministic structural factors and individual agency. However, in contrast to Graeber and Wengrow (2021, p. 206) who, "explore the possibility that human beings have more collective say over their own destiny than we ordinarily assume," this book's argument – libertarian social democracy – "sets the dial" somewhat closer to determinism than individual agency, given the teleological aspect of my argument (according to which history tends toward equal liberty maximization).

Contradictions as a Cause of Historical Change

The claim that liberal democracy (or any system) marks the end of history rests on the assumption that all "contradictions" have been resolved. According to Fukuyama (1992, p. 136), "A 'problem' does not become a 'contradiction' unless it is so serious that it not only cannot be solved within the system, but corrodes the legitimacy of the system itself such that the latter collapses under its own weight." Conversely, Fukuyama continues, "we can argue that history has come to an end if the present form of social and political organization is *completely satisfying* to human beings in their most essential characteristics."

Fukuyama acknowledges the possibility that rival ideas can always emerge. However, if such ideas are to usher in a new stage of history they must expose true contradictions within liberal democracy, rather than mere problems which can be resolved within the existing system (pp. 137–8). In what follows I will focus on liberal democracy's shortcoming in political freedom as a (potential) contradiction spurring history toward egalitarian democracy. In the following teleological summary, I will distinguish between authoritarian, liberal democracy, and egalitarian democracy as three (chronologically ordered) stages of history, focusing on the primary actors involved in the dialectical interaction and the distance from equal liberty in each.

Stages of Modern History: Dialectical Interactions and Equal Liberty

Under authoritarian regimes, the consent of the governed is lacking and there is no electoral accountability for those with decision-making powers in the legislative and/or executive branches. Thus, such systems are explicit about their authoritarianism (as with, for example, the divine right of kings theory). At this early modern stage, historical progress is driven primarily by an interaction between ruling elites and the masses, eventually resulting in a transition to a more democratic form of government.

At the second (current) liberal democratic stage of history, electoral accountability has been achieved, but there are remaining shortcomings in political freedom due to the ongoing existence of class stratification. This continued existence of socioeconomic inequality, and the political inequalities which accompany it, are the primary source of liberal democracy's (potential) contradiction.[78] As with the authoritarian stage, at the liberal democratic stage, historical progress is driven primarily by an interaction between ruling elites and the masses, potentially resulting in a transition to an egalitarian (post-class) democracy. While the lack of freedom is clear under an authoritarian regime, the transition from liberal to egalitarian democracy faces the additional challenge of *recognizing* the lack of freedom in a liberal democracy behind the scenery of electoral competition and peaceful transitions in power.

At the authoritarian and liberal democratic stages of history, the contradictions associated with shortcomings in equal liberty are resolved via an elite-mass dialectical interaction. At the third (not yet realized) egalitarian stage of history, class stratification has been overcome, but an egalitarian democratic state remains to facilitate progress toward anarchy. At this point, the primary struggle for recognition is no longer between socioeconomic classes, but rather among the citizens themselves over the question of whether a paternalistic state is needed to maximize equal liberty. Thus, like the transition from liberal to egalitarian democracy, the transition from egalitarian democracy to anarchy will be driven primarily by *thymos* (the desire for recognition). However, the outcome of that pluralist interaction will itself be determined by the political outcome of the ideological disagreement over which condition is equal liberty maximizing: the state (the liberal perspective) or the decentralized counter-factual (the libertarian position).

In Sum: The End of History from a Libertarian Social Democratic Perspective

From the contemporary perspective of political liberalism, the realization of liberal democracies around the world is the ideal end of history – a situation where all states are classified as "free" in Freedom House's annual Freedom Around the World report, for instance. By contrast, through the lens of libertarian social democracy, the spread of liberal democracy is but one goal along a longer historical trajectory involving the establishment of just law, consensus building, and then decentralization, eventually approximating an anarchist *summum bonum* wherein

[78] I use the term *potential* contradiction to underscore the *weakly* deterministic aspect of the book's perspective. That is, the inequalities associated with liberal democracy will only become a true contradiction (rather than a mere problem) if people demand its full resolution – the abolition of class stratification – which cannot be achieved in a system of democratic capitalism (more on this point in Chap. 8).

each individual is self-governing and autonomous.[79] From that perspective, the final stage of history is not liberal democracy, which only imperfectly realizes freedom and equality, but rather libertarian social democracy, which allows for the complete realization of those virtues. In other words, liberal democracy marks the middle age, rather than the old age (as Fukuyama asserts) of mankind.

1.6 Anarchism and Comparative Politics

One of the transformative changes promoted by this book, as a byproduct of the libertarian social democracy argument, is a new interdisciplinarity between anarchism and comparative political science. Anarchist views toward science in general have varied over the years. On the one hand, anarchists such as Bakunin were suspicious of science, especially with regard to "the power advantages of specialist knowledge" (Kinna, 2019b). On the other hand, anarchists have been open, even eager to incorporate insights from the various fields of scientific research (K. Williams, 2018, p. 54). However, thus far this openness to the sciences has not been extended to comparative politics. While the concept of anarchy (and to a lesser extent, anarchism) is well established in theories of international relations, very little has been done to situate anarchism or anarchy within the field of comparative politics. This separation is attributable to norms within both political science and anarchism.

Within the field of political science, the separation is due to (i) the field's commitment to a politically neutral, positivist outlook amenable to scientific inquiry, (ii) comparativists' focus on domestic state politics (in contrast to the anarchic situation at the international level), (iii) the field's continued adherence to pluralist theory (see Chap. 5), and (iv) a normative commitment to liberal democracy. Libertarian social democracy could offer a new normative sense of direction for political science beyond liberal democracy, bolstering the field's relevance to contemporary social affairs. Such a paradigm shift within the discipline might also seem timely, as political scientists "have yet to reach a consensus about the implications of [inequality] for the health of American democracy" (Piston, 2018, p. 147).

The separation between anarchism and comparative political science can also be attributed to prevailing norms within anarchist thought. There has been a general anarchist suspicion of political science (see Kinna, 2019b). For instance, Laursen (2021, p. 126) suggests that, by consistently focusing on statecraft, political science has conflated states with societies, inducing us "to accept as nature the State's

[79] This philosophy of history aligns to some extent with that of Georg Hegel as described in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* and *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*. However, from the perspective of libertarian social democracy, the *summum bonum* (or, ultimate teleological end) of Hegel's historical vision truncates a longer-term trajectory wherein the elements of gradualist anarchism – just law, consensus, and decentralization – lead us to a deeper realization of equal liberty beyond the liberal democratic state.

overweening presence." Also relevant is the tendency within traditional anarchism to downplay differences across political systems, which is exactly what comparative political science analyzes. While anarchists have long recognized differences between democratic and authoritarian regimes (though even those are often downplayed), a focus on the varieties of democratic institutions has been largely absent from anarchist theorizing, to my knowledge.[80] This dearth of attention on democratic institutions is not entirely surprising, given the anarchist view that "government is government," and the commitment to prefigurative strategy reinforced by that perspective (see Chap. 2).

In sum, both comparative politics and anarchism erect barriers to learning from each other: Comparativists' commitment to liberal democracy and emphasis on differences between political institutions, versus anarchists' commitment to prefiguration and the view that "government is government." The silver lining is that both could also benefit from interdisciplinarity: A new relevance for the field of comparative political science which becomes more critical of liberal democracy, and an enhanced effectiveness of anarchists who become more open to comparativist research and the varying impacts of political institutions on anarchist progress. If gradualism proves more effective than strictly prefigurative approaches, and if it is compatible with anarchist ontology (as argued above), then other important questions become open for inquiry, especially: Which political institutions will be most conducive to the elements of gradualist anarchism: Just law, consensus, and decentralization? (That question is addressed most directly in Chap. 7's discussion of revolutionary objectives in the political realm).[81]

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a historical overview of the rise of state capitalism and liberal democracy, reviewed perspectives on modernization and the current systemic crises facing liberal democracy and neoliberalism, and laid some foundations for the delineation of libertarian social democracy provided in the next three chapters. To move beyond the current impasse in the advancement of equal liberty, paradigm-shifting ideas such as libertarian social democracy, rather than a revival of liberal democratic values, are needed. Libertarian social democracy offers a revised

[80] One partial exception to this is a July 27, 2016 talk by Benjamin Powell titled *Anarchism as a Comparative Institutional Research Program* (https://mises.org/library/anarchism-comparative-institutional-research-program). In that talk, Powell argues that the study of anarchism can be fruitfully advanced through a comparative institutional lens, for instance by comparing economic performances within different institutional settings.

[81] Bearing some resemblance to this argument, Martha Acklesberg, encouraging engagements with political science, observed that "if it is possible to develop institutions in which decision-making power is not always and necessarily concentrated in the hands of an elite, then anarchists might usefully try to persuade their fellow citizens why and highlight the virtues of the alternatives" (paraphrased by Kinna, 2019b).

understanding of anarchism rendering it more suitable as an alternative paradigm at the mass level while promoting a new interdisciplinarity between anarchism and comparative politics. The remainder of this book further develops this argument, continuing with Part I on anarchism, followed by Part II on social revolution.

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Chapter 2
Anarchism in the Political Realm



2.1 Introduction

Prefigurative principle has been central to anarchist theory and praxis since the era of classical anarchism began in the mid-nineteenth century.[1] *Prefigurative anarchism* calls for creating spaces of non-domination in peoples' own lived experiences, avoiding direct engagement with state politics, and developing theory from praxis (based on those lived experiences, from the bottom-up). As was mentioned in Chap. 1, the term *gradualist anarchism* is used here in reference to anarchist approaches, which incorporate a conscious use of state power as an instrument of anarchist progress, contrary to the prefigurative principle.[2] This understanding of gradualist anarchism is distinct from what we might call *prefigurative gradualism*, that is, gradual social progress toward anarchy achieved without deviating from prefigurative principle (discussed below).

Given its long-standing centrality to anarchist theory and praxis, only the prefigurative side of the spectrum of anarchist strategy has been fully recognized and

[1] Classical anarchism is sometimes viewed as spanning from the First International Workingmen's Association (1864–76) and the anarchism of Mikhail Bakunin (1814–76) to the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 (Schmidt & van der Walt, 2009). Graham (2015, p. 243) associates the First International with the beginning of the anarchist movement, noting that "it was in the early 1880s that anarchism really came into its own." According to Kinna (2019, p. 26), "Together, the [Paris] Commune [of 1871] and Haymarket [Affair of 1886] furnished anarchists with a distinctive perspective on the state and a model for non-state, anarchist alternatives." Others have viewed the era of classical anarchism beginning with the earlier work of William Godwin (1756–1836) (Fowler, 1972; Crowder, 1992; Williams, 2018).

[2] There is some overlap between the tactics considered prefigurative (and thus also potentially anarchist) according to Franks' (2020) criteria, and those tactics that would fall under the category of gradualist anarchism as I've defined it (i.e., any engagements with establishment politics). For example, running an electoral campaign to promote anarchist causes might be considered prefigurative according to Franks' nuanced definition, but would be classified as gradualist rather than prefigurative according to my bright-line definition.

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developed.[3] While scattered examples (and/or endorsements) of gradualism can be found in the history of anarchist thought (reviewed later in this chapter), a unifying theoretical framework that incorporates gradualism alongside more traditional prefigurative approaches has yet to be given an explicit, thorough, and systematic exposition.[4] This chapter argues that anarchist theory and praxis are best understood as spanning a continuum from prefigurative to gradualist and outlines a comprehensive framework reflecting that understanding.[5] In so doing, this chapter reconceptualizes gradualism, stresses its distinction from prefiguration, and clarifies the often murky relationship between anarchism and mainstream political participation.[6]

Such a shift within anarchist thought will be more conducive to the promotion of anarchism as an alternative paradigm at the societal level for two reasons. First, it recognizes that conscious uses of states as instruments of anarchist progress (after a successful social revolution) could be more conducive to the advancement of equal liberty than a purely prefigurative approach. Second, the commitment to prefiguration limits anarchism's impact by making it difficult to adequately address mainstream concerns about *bad anarchy* – where the decentralization of power yields a net loss in equal liberty.[7] I have already sought to demonstrate in Chap. 1 that gradualist anarchism is consistent with anarchist ontology.

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[3] Corresponding with this spectrum of anarchist strategy (from prefigurative to gradualist), in Chap. 4, I will discuss a spectrum of anarchist positions on what I will call *the centralization question*: What level of decentralization is equal liberty maximizing? Along the libertarian side of the spectrum, anarchist responses range from radical prefigurative (favoring a near-term abolition of state power) to cautious gradualism (favoring measured steps towards anarchy). Beyond this range of libertarian views, one finds liberalism, republicanism, conservatism, and ever more authoritarian or "Hobbesian" perspectives on the necessity of state power.

[4] Raekstad and Gradin (2020, p. 9) note that, "The Bolsheviks who led the Russian Revolution in 1917 did little to theorise how a better society might be built once the state had been seized." To my knowledge, no comprehensive exposition has been done since then either, particularly among anarchists who have generally rejected the idea of seizing state power.

[5] One might reasonably ask if it is necessary to update anarchism as suggested here: If anarchism is not broken, why fix it? Perhaps it would be simpler to adhere to the view that anarchism must be prefigurative (e.g., Franks, 2020), but potentially assisted by a non-anarchist state (Raekstad & Gradin, 2020). However, as was emphasized in the Introduction, it is here argued that a more comprehensive understanding of anarchism is more conceptually valid, and more conducive to the advancement of anarchism as an alternative paradigm at the societal level.

[6] This relationship is "murky" in the sense that many anarchists denounce mainstream political participation, while others favor such participation as a means of advancing anarchism. For example, some anarchists supported the Bernie Sanders US presidential campaign in 2016 and 2020. On the other hand, Franks (2020) provides clear criteria indicating when participation in establishment politics can be consistent with anarchism. I also offer a set of criteria, although these are distinct from those posited by Franks.

[7] The term bad anarchy is adopted from Seyferth (2009, p. 281), who observes that failed states "are examples of 'bad anarchy' so many people fear." Underscoring a similar possibility, Asimakopoulos (2014, pp. 31–2) mentions that "an overnight abolition of government, existing institutions, and life processes would result in chaos without necessarily delivering the desired outcomes."

This chapter turns next to a discussion of liberal democracy – the prevailing paradigm in the political realm – focusing in particular on the relationship between democracy and anarchism, as well as the anarchist critique of liberal democracy, which reveals the latter's limits as a vehicle for historical progress toward equal liberty, and draws our attention to the need for an alternative paradigm. After that, I turn to a discussion of prefigurative anarchism, highlighting its historical connection to anarchist thought, followed by a critique of prefiguration. All this sets the stage for an overview of gradualist anarchism, including examples of gradualism from the history of anarchist theory and praxis, and a comprehensive gradualist framework.

2.2 Liberal Democracy and Social Progress

Equal Liberty and Liberal Democracy

In contemporary intellectual as well as lay discourse, liberal democracy is widely recognized as the type of political regime most conducive to freedom and equality.[8] As was mentioned in the Introduction, liberal democracy has also become the gold standard for national political systems, especially since the end of the Cold War (Sigman & Lindberg, 2019). In comparative political science research, liberal democratic political systems are defined as having three essential characteristics: free and fair competition between at least two political parties, universal suffrage, and constitutionally enshrined individual rights (e.g., Diamond, 2008; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018, p. 6). That is the definition of liberal democracy used in this book.[9]

Liberal democracy has been associated with freedom in other ways as well. According to Amartya Sen (1999), there are three inherent benefits that democracies have over their authoritarian counterparts: the intrinsic importance of political freedom, the instrumental value of allowing people to be heard, and the constructive role of giving citizens an opportunity to learn from one another. Democratic states are also viewed as more immune to elite capture than authoritarian states, as the pluralist interest group competition associated with the former frustrates elite attempts to concentrate and utilize state power for their own private gain (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

[8] Unless otherwise noted, the terms *liberty* or *freedom* (used interchangeably) will be used in reference to both individual and aggregate/political levels of analysis. By contrast, Hayek (2011 [1960], p. 62) privileges individual over political freedoms, arguing, "It can scarcely be contended that the inhabitants of the District of Columbia […] do not enjoy full personal liberty because they do not share in political liberty."

[9] Notice that liberal democracy so defined describes the type of political regime rather than the type of economic system. Thus, for instance, both the United States (US) with its liberal market economy and Germany with its coordinated market economy (to borrow Hall and Soskice's terminology from *Varieties of Capitalism*) are generally classified as liberal democracies.

Anarchism and Democracy

Like Liberal Democracy, Anarchism Emphasizes Equal Liberty

Like the proponents of liberal democracy, anarchists emphasize the importance of freedom and equality – referred to here as *equal liberty* – as a historical objective.[10] This goal was implicit in Bakunin's famous statement that "I am truly free only when all human beings, men and women, are equally free."[11] Similarly, I understand equal liberty as freedom enjoyed by all, rather than at the expense of one another as in a master-slave relationship. Saul Newman (2001, p. 167) has described the "interrelatedness of freedom and equality" as "the central ethical principle of anarchism."[12] In his book *Wither Anarchism?*, Kristian Williams (2018, p. 46) suggests that "the place any new anarchist theory should start is with re-centering the old ideals of freedom and equality."

Equal liberty is also the primary objective in the socially liberal political philosophy of John Rawls (1971). Given the centrality of equal liberty to the politically liberal and/or republican as well as the anarchist worldviews, it is not surprising to find some points of tangency between the two ideological camps.[13] For instance, according to Kinna and Prichard (2019), while fundamental differences between anarchism and republicanism exist (especially the latter's commitment to the state and private property), a "conception of freedom as non-domination" can be found in both perspectives.[14]

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[10] I initially adopted the term *equal liberty* from Newman (2011). Historically, the term was used, for example, by Emma Goldman at her October 17, 1893 hearing in New York for unlawful assembly, where she proclaimed that, "we seek for each an equal liberty to cultivate the talents and abilities as well the attainments of the highest knowledge" (Falk, 2003, p. 182). Another early example can be found in Lysander Spooner's *No Treason*, where he refers to a "law of nature" authorizing each "to seek his own happiness in his own way […] so long as he does not trespass upon the equal liberty of others" (quoted in Johnson, 2008, p. 167).

[11] Bakunin, M. (1871). *Man, Society, and Freedom*. Marxists Internet Archive. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1871/man-society.htm

[12] Consistent with post-anarchist philosophy, Newman also recognizes Max Stirner's notion of the ego – "a radical emptiness, a nonplace which rejects essence, affirming instead flux, contingency, and becoming" – as central to anarchism (Newman, 2001, p. 140). This later view is more consistent with the "post-modern suspicion of universalist claims" including the goal of freedom and equality (Williams, 2018, pp. 46–7).

[13] Although there are some important distinctions between republicanism and liberalism (see Pettit, 2014; Kinna & Prichard, 2019), I occasionally bundle the two together in discussions about political ideology.

[14] In the mid-nineteenth century, an "anarchist heritage of the republican tradition" could be found, for instance, in Proudhon's political thought. However, after the Paris Commune of 1871, there was a "re-alignment of anarchism against republicanism" as radicals came to associate the latter with colonialism and racism (Kinna & Prichard, 2019).

Anarchism as Radical Democracy

Some have also associated anarchism with radical or direct (as opposed to liberal or representative) democracy. For instance, it has been argued that "democracy, radically conceived, *is* anarchy" (Newman, 2011, p. 34). Wayne Price (2020) defines anarchism simply as "democracy without the state." On the left, democracy is sometimes associated with council communism (Boraman, 2017, p. 253) and libertarian socialism (Wetzel, 2022, p. 124). According to Schmidt and van der Walt (2009, p. 70), "Anarchism would be nothing less than the most complete realization of *democracy* – democracy in the fields, factories, and neighborhoods, coordinated through federal structures and councils from below upward, and based on economic and social equality." More broadly, David Graeber (2002) described anarchism as "a movement about reinventing democracy."

The Anarchist Critique of Liberal Democracy

Anarchism Versus Democracy

Meanwhile, others have argued that anarchism is incompatible with democracy in any form (Lundström, 2020). For example, CrimethInc. Ex-Workers' Collective (2020, pp. 220–1) opposes both representative and direct democracy, writing that "It is strange to use the word *democracy* for the idea that the state is inherently undesirable. The proper word for that idea is *anarchism*." Instead, CrimethInc. promotes spaces of encounter in which "people can exchange influence and ideas, forming fluid constellations around shared goals to take action." According to Woodcock (1962, p. 33), "No conception of anarchism is further from the truth than that which regards it as an extreme form of democracy. Democracy advocates the sovereignty of the people. Anarchism advocates the sovereignty of the person." Also, according to Uri Gordon (2008, p. 70), "the outcomes of anarchist process are inherently impossible to enforce. That is why the process is not 'democratic' at all […] Anarchism, then, represents not the most radical form of democracy, but an altogether different paradigm of collective action."

Anarchist views on liberal democracy have varied over the years since the era of classical anarchism. Lundström (2018) distinguishes between a classical critique of democracy (1840–1939), a postclassical reclamation of democracy (1940–2017), and a more recent reclaimed critique. During the classical era, anarchists viewed the liberal state as "another insidious attempt to mask the brutal, despotic character of the state" (Newman, 2001, p. 28). For example, the harsh government reactions to the Paris Commune (1871) and Haymarket Affair in Chicago (1886) showed that "progressive republics legitimized systems of state oppression that were as unjust and partial as anything that had gone on before" (Kinna, 2019, p. 25).

In *Statism and Anarchy*, Bakunin (1990 [1873], p. 114) asserts that "forms of popular representation, do not impede state, military, political, and financial

despotism. Instead, they have the effect of legitimizing it and giving it a false appearance of popular government." A similar perspective is found in Alexander Berkman's letter to Emma Goldman, sent from the Pennsylvania Western Penitentiary in December of 1901: "[I]n an absolutism, the autocrat is visible and tangible. The real despotism of republican institutions is far deeper, more insidious, because it rests on the popular delusion of self-government and independence" (Falk, 2003, p. 488). The anarchist view of liberal democracy suggests that such regimes are not truly democratic. As Manicas (2011, p. 96) notes, "For [anarchists], the institutions of the state are inherently institutions of domination. The state is thus necessarily antidemocratic." Consistent with that observation, in his account of the Spanish Civil War, Evans (2020, p. 7) refers to the Spanish anarchists' "insistence on the totalitarian essence of even democratic states."

The Anarchist Critique Is Especially Plausible Under a Ruling Class

The anarchist view that even liberal democracies are ultimately authoritarian is especially plausible under conditions of extreme socioeconomic inequality. Indeed, the existence of a ruling class would seem to indicate a lack of autonomy by definition.[15] Even in a nominally democratic society, given a high level of wealth concentration, the political elite and upper classes who benefit from the status quo would presumably be unlikely to leave political outcomes to the uncertainties of a truly free and open democratic process. Thus, James Scott's (2012, p. xvi) observation that "democracy is a cruel hoax without *relative* equality" is quite plausible.

In the context of an unequal democracy, it is more likely that the flow of information, cultural norms (including the "Overton window"), access to the vote, basic freedoms such as speech and assembly, electoral politics, and public policy outcomes will be controlled and circumscribed in a variety of ways to ensure the continuation of the status quo (or to adjust it in elite-preferred directions). Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that the contemporary public relations sector developed first in the United States and Britain as a means of shaping public opinion (Chomsky, 1989, pp. 14–20).

In sum, the spread of democracy in recent centuries appears to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, as many anarchists have acknowledged, the spread of liberal democratic rights can be viewed as the gradual consolidation of equal liberty, where states become unwitting vehicles for anarchist progress as political elites offer concessions to the masses in the context of an elite-mass bargaining interaction (more on this in Chap. 5). On the other hand, the anarchist critique – or "anarchist squint" (Scott, 2012, p. xii) – questions how free liberal democracies truly are,

[15] The term *ruling class* here refers to a relatively narrow minority of the population with a highly concentrated share of the nation's wealth, as well as disproportionate influence over electoral politics, policy making, and political culture. So defined, the term corresponds roughly with other terms such as plutocracy, aristocracy, oligarchy, and power elite. The idea of a ruling class is discussed further in Chap. 7.

and exposes the limits of such systems as vehicles for progress toward a free and equal society. While traditional anarchism provides an attractive alternative paradigm to liberal democracy, an updated approach (i.e., gradualism) can help to increase the popularity of anarchist ideas.

2.3 Prefigurative Anarchism

Prefigurative Anarchist Strategy

A Traditional Anarchist Perspective

Since its emergence as a social movement in the nineteenth century, "anarchism seems to retain its central character as a viewpoint opposed to the presence of coercion, hierarchy, and authority in human affairs" (Williams, 2007, p. 300). More specifically, the prefigurative principle has been central to anarchist thought since the classical anarchism era. As Matthew Wilson (2011, p. 84) writes in *Rules without Rulers*,

> The [prefigurative] idea stretches back to the earliest anarchist thinkers: perhaps most famously, Bakunin argued that we cannot expect a libertarian society to come into being using authoritarian means. And, regardless of any other changes anarchism may have been through, the idea has continued to inform anarchist theory and practice ever since.

According to Graham (2015, p. 255), "One of the key points made by the anarchists in the [First] International was the need for revolutionary organizations to mirror the society that they hoped to achieve." This prohibition on the use of state power distinguished the anarchist left from classical Marxists and Leninists who advocated the use of a proletariat transitionary state to achieve stateless communism (Woodcock, 1962, p. 31; Kramnick, 1972, p. 114; Stafford, 1972, p. 106; Newman, 2001, p. 25; Graham, 2015, p. 162). Because Marxists saw capitalism and the bourgeoisie as the primary source of oppression, they believed that a proletariat state would be less oppressive than the bourgeois state. By contrast, "anarchists like Mikhail Bakunin insisted that the state must be seen as the main impediment to socialist revolution, and that it was oppressive no matter what form it took or which class controlled it."[16] Indicative of the ongoing commitment to prefiguration, in the early twentieth century, Errico Malatesta (2015, pp. 13–14) wrote that "Anarchism is the method by which to achieve anarchy […] without authoritarian organisms which, by using force, even, possibly for good ends, impose their will on others."

[16] Newman, N. (2010). *The Politics of Postanarchism.* The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/saul-newman-the-politics-of-postanarchism. Some have questioned how substantial the differences between libertarian socialism and Marxism truly are. For instance, Blackledge (2010) argues that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is more accurately understood as the rule of the (working class) majority, as opposed to a state in the conventional sense of the term.

Kristian Williams (2018, p. 27) observes that, as anarchists in the United States turned to pacifism during World War II, prefiguration was also "locked into the anarchist movement." While the commitment to prefiguration remained more-or-less in place, in the 1960s and 1970s, anarchism became increasingly influenced by intersectionality (developed by black feminist thinkers such as Kimberlé Crenshaw and Angela Davis (Reagan, 2021, pp. 131–5)) and poststructuralist understanding of power (influenced by authors such as Michel Foucault).

Thus, anarchists began to expand their critiques beyond the abstract behemoths of state and capital and toward the various types of domination, in the various capillaries of power as well as our own personal lives (Raekstad & Gradin, 2020). Also highlighting this turning point in anarchist thought, Uri Gordon (2008, p. 20) explains in *Anarchy Alive!* that "The generalisation of the target of anarchist struggle from 'state and capital' to 'domination' is what most distinctly draws contemporary anarchism apart from its earlier generations." More recently, the post-anarchist school that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as contemporary anarchist writers such as Murray Bookchin,[17] Benjamin Franks (2014), and Tom Wetzel (2022) have continued to adhere, more-or-less explicitly, to prefigurative principle.[18]

Today, prefigurative strategies aim to confront existing political institutions, to develop alternatives to representative democracy, and to make the "struggle and the goal, the real and the ideal, become one in the present" (Maeckelbergh, 2011, p. 4). Prefiguration is described as "living your vision of an alternative world as you struggle to create it" (Juris, 2009, p. 219). Others have described anarchism as "a prefigurative practice – a politics that seeks to lay the foundations of a future society in the present" (Shannon et al., 2012, p. 12). According to Gordon (2012, p. 214), "anarchist values are expressed in everyday activities and practices, stressing the realization of egalitarian social relations within the fold of the movement itself, rather than expecting them to only become relevant 'after the revolution'." In *Anarchy Alive!* Gordon (2008, p. 55) observes that "The entire premise of anarchist ideas for social change is that society can and should be altered 'without taking power' – without building a new apparatus of power-over that would impose different social relations from above."

[17] In his book *The Ecology of Freedom*, Bookchin (2005, p. 446) observes that, "Libertarian forms of organization have the enormous responsibility of trying to resemble the society they are seeking to develop. They can tolerate no disjunction between ends and means." Also indicative of Bookchin's adherence to prefigurative principle, he writes, "Since [municipal] confederations would exist primarily in opposition to statecraft, they cannot be compromised by state, provincial, or national elections, much less achieved by these means." Bookchin, M. (1991). *Libertarian Municipalism: An Overview*. The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/murray-bookchin-libertarian-municipalism-an-overview

[18] The post-anarchist school can be distinguished from classical anarchism by the former's relaxation of essentialist claims such as that the state is the primary source of oppression. Rather, as Todd May (1994, p. 12) observes, "the sites of oppression are numerous and intersecting." Or, as Shannon (2012, p. 279) explains, when it comes to domination, "there is *no root.*" However, even during its shift toward intersectionality and post-structuralism, the prefigurative principle has remained a distinguishing characteristic of anarchism.

Prefigurative Anarchist Revolutionary Cycles

Anarchists have utilized several prefigurative and/or "outsider" tactics, including insurrectionary and mass anarchism (Schmidt & van der Walt, 2009, p. 144), organizational dualism – i.e., "the formation of specific anarchist political groups *in addition* to mass organizations like syndicalist unions" (ibid, pp. 22–3; Wetzel, 2022, p. 203)[19] – as well as revolutionary and protest strategies (Kinna, 2005, pp. 132–47). Emphasizing the role of organized labor, Graham (2015, p. 202) notes that "In Belgium, the internationalists debated the use of the general strike 'as *the* means to social Revolution' at their April 1873 congress in Verviers." Meanwhile, others feared that any type of organization would create an elite vanguard that would assume control of social movements rather than promote self-empowerment (Graham, 2015, p. 255).

Prefigurative anarchism also emphasizes the importance of establishing autonomous zones beyond the reach of state power (Ward & Goodway, 2014, pp. 11–12; Olson, 2009, pp. 39–40). Prefigurative tactics can be found among collectivist as well as individualist anarchists. For example, the market anarchist movement (from the individualist camp) known as *agorism* is described as "a revolutionary movement led by workers and entrepreneurs voluntarily cooperating in economic exchanges that take place outside of the State's grasp."[20] Another individualist anarchist writer Joe Peacott (2017, p. 9) writes, "Only anarchist means have any hope of producing anarchist ends."

Prefigurative strategy does include paths to social revolution. In her book *The Government of No One*, Ruth Kinna (2019, p. 125) distinguishes between revolutionary and evolutionist anarchist perspectives. On the one hand, *evolutionists* (such as followers of Proudhon) considered their views revolutionary but favored incremental, gradual change, fearing that a violent insurrection would empower a new ruling elite. By contrast, *revolutionaries* (such as Kropotkin and Malatesta) also saw an incremental evolutionary process but one punctuated by transformative revolutionary events and insurrections.[21]

A prefigurative revolutionary cycle might be summarized generically as follows. First, the stage is set for an anarchist insurrection by developing prefigurative organizations and practices (such as syndicalist unions, autonomous zones, mutual aid networks, and cooperatives), expanding and integrating them from the bottom-up

[19] Organizational dualism was advocated by "platformists" (exiled anarchist veterans of the 1917 Russian Revolution such as Nestor Makhno), as well as Bakunin in an 1868 program for the International Brotherhood, according to which the brotherhood would provide "unity of revolutionary thought and action" amidst the insurrectionary movement (Graham, 2015, pp. 101, 255).

[20] Bronze, D. (2016, September 13). *Agorism is not Anarcho-Capitalism*. Center 4 Stateless Society. https://c4ss.org/content/46153

[21] Similar to this punctuated revolutionary view, Wetzel's vision of libertarian socialism, as described in *Overcoming Capitalism*, includes an evolutionary process in which the pursuit of certain reforms contributes to the expansion of working class organizations, leading up to a revolutionary "general strike expropriation" of all industries (Wetzel, 2022, pp. 240–2).

until such organizations rival state-based institutions in terms of popularity and capacity to sustainably meet society's needs – a moment referred to as *dual power*. At that point, an insurrection can potentially succeed in toppling the state and establishing a sustainable anarchist alternative (Williams, 2012, p. 32; Reagan, 2021, p. 154).[22]

According to Malatesta, the period of anarchy after an insurrection would last as long as there was a critical mass of individuals opposed to any type of government. The aim is to contain those who wish to re-establish government, without relying on state power to do so. The level of success achieved by this anti-government movement reflected the effectiveness of anarchists' educational and propaganda efforts before, during, and after the insurrection.[23] If any type of government is re-established, the revolutionary struggle continues, always from outside of state politics (Malatesta, 2015, pp. 177–80).

Both the prefigurative and gradualist approach (as I've defined it) face major challenges. As Michael Reagan (2021, p. 168) observes, "how to relate to the state is a major question, whether to avoid and ignore it, enter and redirect it, or something else altogether are all strategies with serious pitfalls and problems." Indeed, while prefigurative anarchism faces the formidable challenges of building support for anarchism from the margins of society (e.g., via autonomous zones[24]) and consolidating anarchist gains without relying on statist institutions, gradualist anarchism (discussed below) faces the converse challenges of establishing and sustaining an egalitarian democratic transitionary state and maintaining consensus on anarchistic principles amidst the welter of competing interest groups in society. What follows is a critique of the prefigurative approach, especially the tendency to downplay differences across political regime types, and perceived vulnerability to the risk of bad anarchy.[25]

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[22] Roughly corresponding to this overview of prefigurative revolution, Graham (2015, p. 199) describes an early program of anarcho-syndicalism as "the organization of workers in trade unions and similar bodies based on class struggle, through which the workers will become conscious of their class power, ultimately resulting in the destruction of capitalism and the state, to be replaced by the free federation of the workers based on the organizations they created themselves during their struggle for liberation."

[23] The meaning of the term *propaganda* has shifted over the years. Prior to the interwar period, "propaganda was readily associated with open debate and political persuasion" rather than psychological manipulation (Kinna, 2019, p. 99).

[24] Prefigurative organizations such as syndicalist unions, autonomous zones, and mutual aid efforts are not necessarily at the margins of society once they achieve some level of popularity, sustainability, and federal integration. From a libertarian socialist perspective, mass working-class organizations (unions, cooperatives, and community associations) would form the basis of a movement capable of replacing the State and employers with direct, participatory democracy (Wetzel, 2022, p. 123). However, prior to such a dual power situation, statist institutions remain predominant in the society and prefigurative organizations remain relatively unknown to the wider community.

[25] These critiques of traditional anarchism are not new. As Gelderloos (2016, p. 1) observes: "For over a hundred years, anarchists have been accused of both […romanticism] for insisting that even now we can create societies free of coercive institutions […and radical cynicism] for maintaining that all forms of government are fundamentally oppressive."

A Critique of Prefigurative Anarchism

Downplaying Differences Across Political Regime Types

Anarchists often warn that the state will tend to become captured by elites who utilize their positions of power to advance their own interests at the expense of the majority and that the state certainly cannot be expected to wither away when the time is right. For instance, according to Gelderloos (2016, p. 241), "Lenin already proved that states do not wither away if we are using them as instruments for change." More generally, "Anarchists argue that the state will not wither away of its own accord after a tumultuous period while it is controlled by benevolent leftists" (Shannon et al., 2012, p. 21). In a similar vein, Laursen (2021) likens the State to a digital operating system, analogous to Windows, Linus, or macOS, whose primary activity is to reproduce itself. The view that all types of government tend to be tyrannical can be found in the writings of various anarchists, including Stirner,[26] Bakunin,[27] Kropotkin,[28] Reclus,[29] Malatesta,[30] Goldman,[31] and among contemporary anarchists such as Landstreicher,[32] Chartier,[33] and Gelderloos.[34]

As these examples suggest, anarchists have long exhibited a tendency to downplay differences across political regime types. As Ruth Kinna (2005, p. 52) explains,

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[26] For instance, Stirner (1919 [1844], p. 204) asserts that, "Every State is a *despotism*, be the despot one or many."

[27] In *God and the State*, Bakunin (1970 [1882], p. 35) declares, "we reject all legislation, all authority, and all privileged, licensed, official, and legal influence, even though arising from universal suffrage, convinced that it can turn only to the advantage of a dominant minority of exploiters against the interests of the immense majority in subjection to them."

[28] According to Kropotkin (2002 [1909], p. 238), "it is the essence of all government to take the side of the reaction against revolution, and to have a tendency towards despotism."

[29] Reclus (2013 [1894], p. 122) discusses how individuals working for the state, "are raised up above their fellow citizens in dignity, power, and preferential treatment, and are consequently compelled to think themselves superior to the common people."

[30] Confirming his suspicion of all types of government, Malatesta (2015, p. 148) asserts that, "We will no more recognise a republican Constituent than we now recognise the parliamentary monarchy."

[31] In the "International Anarchist Manifesto on the War." printed in *Mother Earth* in May of 1915, Goldman and her co-authors wrote, "Whatever the form it may assume, the State is nothing but organized oppression for the advantage of a privileged minority" (Falk, 2012, p. 516).

[32] According to Landstreicher (2012, p. 180), "the term 'state' refers to an accumulation of power […] the individuals who accumulate power institutionalize it in this form in order to maintain and expand their monopoly on power."

[33] In Chartier's view, "As long as there's a state apparatus in place, the wealthy can capture it, using it to gain power and more wealth, while the politically powerful can use it to acquire wealth and more power." Chartier, C. (2012, November 5). *The Distinctiveness of Left-Libertarianism*. Bleeding Heart Libertarians. http://bleedingheartlibertarians.com/2012/11/the-distinctiveness-of-left-libertarianism/

[34] Gelderloos (2016, p. 91) asserts that, "all modern states are fundamentally totalitarian, differing by degree and strategies for disguising or celebrating this fact."

"anarchist critiques of government violence tend to encourage anarchists to blur the differences, sometimes to the point of blindness, between forms of government." While invaluable as a source of critical thinking, this outlook can also limit anarchism's impact. For instance, Kristian Williams (2018, p. 49) writes that "The inability to develop a theory of the state (or more modestly, an analysis of states), one that can take account of both the differences between governments and also the changes within them, has repeatedly steered the anarchist movement into blind alleys." The tendency to downplay differences across political regimes, in turn, reinforces the lopsided commitment to a prefigurative (over gradualist) strategy. After all, if governments are invariably tyrannical, they obviously cannot be relied on to promote anarchism.[35]

Anarchists have often recognized some benefits of liberal democracy over its authoritarian counterparts. For example, citing passages from Stirner, Proudhon, and Bakunin, Guérin (1970, p. 20) observed that "in spite of their savage attacks on bourgeois democracy, the anarchists admitted that it is relatively progressive." For instance, in *What is Property?* Proudhon (2013 [1840], p. 51) wrote that "Undoubtedly, when a nation passes from the monarchical to the democratic state, there is progress." Also, Peter Kropotkin argued that independent states were better off than colonized ones (Gordon, 2008, p. 153).

Contemporary anarchists have also recognized differences between regime types. For example, Gordon (2008, p. 155) asserts that "A Palestinian state, no matter how capitalist, corrupt or pseudo-democratic, would in any event be less brutal than an occupying Israeli state." Also, Lundström (2020) observes that during the postclassical period of anarchism, some anarchists viewed democracy as a step toward anarchy. Furthermore, according to Gelderloos (2016, p. 236): "The particular state model in force clearly has a huge impact on our day-to-day life." However, such observations remain footnotes to the predominant anarchist view that states are ultimately alike and thus cannot be relied upon to advance freedom in the world.

The commitment to prefiguration renders anarchism more vulnerable to the risk of (or, at least, inadequately addresses public concerns about) what is perhaps *the* main argument against anarchism in popular discourse: the Hobbesian concern about bad anarchy.[36] According to Leonard Williams (2020, p. 117), "People often see the state as playing an ameliorative role in solving social problems, and even if they are suspicious of certain parties or systems, find it hard to see how society might get from the capitalist state to the anarchist utopia all in one go." Also, as Kinna (2019, p. 11) explains, "The prevailing view is that human beings want to

[35] Making a similar point, Franks (2020, p. 40) observes that, "The flipside to the [anarchists'] condemnation of representative, constitutional methods' poor track record in achieving emancipatory, anti-capitalist social relations is the evocation of the benefits of prefigurative approaches."

[36] When I describe mainstream fears of anarchy as Hobbesian, I don't mean to suggest that the average person is knowledgeable about or directly influenced by Thomas Hobbes' political philosophy, particularly that expressed in *Leviathan*. Rather, I mean to say that the public fear of anarchy resembles Hobbes' view of anarchy as a war of all against all, and that Hobbes' writing has had a lasting impression on political thought in the West.

escape from the inconvenience or violence of anarchy and, because they have the wit to do so (uniquely, we are told), they submit to government."

This concern about bad anarchy is revealed in aspects of popular culture such as "The Purge" movie series (in which a state-sanctioned period of anarchy unleashes widespread killing), the "thin blue line" emblem symbolizing society's reliance on police to prevent a descent into violent chaos, and stances on public policy such as opposition to defunding police departments following the killing of George Floyd in May 2020.[37] Even if the public's concerns about bad anarchy are exaggerated (as they likely are), the failure to effectively address such concerns unnecessarily diminishes anarchism's popularity and attractiveness as an alternative paradigm to liberal democracy.[38]

The Risk of Bad Anarchy

Anarchists tend to argue that abolishing government would be a net benefit to society, emphasizing that many laws created by the state serve narrow interests, that the state upholds conditions of inequality and alienation which increase crime rates, and that the state is itself a major contributor to crime and rights violations.[39] As Frieden, Lake, and Schultz (2019, p. 522) note, "governments around the world may themselves be the biggest threats to our human rights." Thus Lucy Parsons anticipated that "were every law, every title deed, every court, and every police officer or soldier abolished tomorrow with one sweep, we would be better off than now" (quoted in Laursen, 2021, p. 69).

Some examples of unjust laws can underscore the plausibility of such views. For instance, consider the United States National Housing Act of 1934, which created the Federal Housing Authority (FHA). In areas such as Ferguson, St. Louis, the FHA incorporated "residential security maps" into their 1936 underwriting handbook, dividing urban areas into four zones and using "red lining" to maintain racial segregation (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019, p. 329). Another example of an unjust law (or, in this case, set of policies) is the Drug War in the United States which, according to one of former president Richard Nixon's top advisors, was at least

[37] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2020, July 9). *George Floyd: Pew survey on US attitudes to police reveals changes*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53343551

[38] While this book's argument (including the idea of a democratic transitionary state, discussed below) more effectively addresses mainstream concerns about bad anarchy, it might be criticized for "excesses of revolutionary imagery which corrode anarchism's credibility" (Condit, 2019, p. 152). However, in Chap. 6, I will attempt to demonstrate the moral imperative of social revolution in the United States.

[39] In a similar vein, Newman (2012, pp. 313–4) observes that acting outside of the law to preserve the law is "the very essence of state power." Making a similar point, Laursen (2021, p. 91) writes, "even smaller states habitually operate outside the rules they set for their citizens, other inhabitants, and even themselves."

partly intended to target blacks and hippies.[40] Another example is the laws passed in many US states which make it a crime to support the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israeli apartheid.[41]

Indeed, one can imagine scenarios where the net level of equal liberty under decentralization would be greater than that under centralized power, as anarchists generally predict. As Molyneux explains, "Whatever the risks of dissolving the central state, they are far less than the certain destruction of allowing it to escalate, as it inevitably will."[42] And, according to Paul Goodman, "[anarchism] claims that in most human affairs […] more harm than good results from […] central authority" (Stoer, 1994, p. 13). For example, Campbell (2020, p. 182) provides the following account of how the abolition of state-power in Cherán, Mexico improved the situation there:

> When several women stepped in front of a logging truck on April 15, 2011, it was an act of defiant desperation, not a tactic in the service of a larger political program. Yet as the uprising swept oppressive forces, such as the cartels, police, and municipal authorities, from the territory of Cherán, an opening was created that could have been filled in a variety of ways. Into the vacuum stepped the power of an organized community transitioning almost seamlessly from revolt to a process of consolidation that led to the creation of the communal government that's still in place.[43]

On the other hand, one can also imagine scenarios where the net level of equal liberty under decentralization is *less* than what it would have been under centralized power (Crowder, 1992).[44] After all, given their monopoly on coercion, states have certain advantages when it comes to promoting collective action and preventing crime, such as the ability to levy taxes, pay salaries to public service employees (thus avoiding free rider problems), and creating and enforcing laws. According to

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[40] LoBianco, T. (2016, March 24). *Report: Aide says Nixon's war on drugs targeted blacks, hippies*. CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2016/03/23/politics/john-ehrlichman-richard-nixon-drug-war-blacks-hippie/index.html

[41] Democracy Now. (2021, July 22). *Israel Asks U.S. States to Probe Ben & Jerry's for Violating Anti-BDS Laws*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/7/22/headlines/israel_asks_us_states_to_probe_ben_jerrys_for_violating_anti_bds_laws

[42] Philosophy Workout 2. (2018, March 15). *Practical Anarchy: The Freedom of the Future* [Video; 05:07:30]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlwOtHab44U

[43] Cherán was well prepared to skip the transitionary state phase, in that "Cherán, both in its collective memory and practical organization, had tools at the ready for coming together as a community in the absence of political authority" (Campbell, 2020, p. 183). Also, the region's processes are "aided by the fact that 95% of Cherán's residents are originally from Cherán" (ibid, p. 186). By contrast, attempting to achieve anarchy at the national level, in one step, especially where such conditions conducive to anarchy are lacking, seems far more risky.

[44] Making a similar point, neoclassical economists and market anarchists have at times analyzed the marginal costs and benefits of state power. For instance, in *Calculus of Consent* Buchanan and Tullock's (1990 [1962]) model identifies an optimal rule (i.e., majority size required for legislative approval), which minimizes the transaction and conformity costs of collective action. Also, Peter Stringham (2015, Fig. 12.1) argues that there is some ideal quantity of rules beyond which the marginal net benefit of government becomes negative.

Acemoglu and Robinson (2019, p. 50), "Constitutions can thus enable society to exercise its power in a more consistent manner."

Just as the laws promulgated at the central level can be either just or unjust, so too can sub-national laws and/or norms prevailing at the mass-level tend in either direction (Treisman, 2007). Thus, it is conceivable that the laws of a central government can potentially make a net contribution to equal liberty. In a similar vein, Tamblyn (2019, p. 76) asserts that "Anarchism and the law need not be antithetical." One is also reminded of James Madison's argument in *Federalist 10* that decentralization would allow self-interested parties to exert tyrannical majoritarian control over their society. For example, after the ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), "Unless the national political elite directly challenged the political power of the southern elite, the pattern [of segregation] was unlikely to change" (Schubert et al., 2014, p. 317). Indeed, a 1959 poll found that 72 percent of white Southerners continued to object to school desegregation (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 284).

In their 2019 book *The Narrow Corridor,* Acemoglu and Robinson argue that, in the absence of state power (i.e., an "absent Leviathan"), an oppressive "cage of norms" can reign at the mass-level, undermining individual liberties. For example, they describe the caste system of India as norms-based (ibid, Ch. 8). Also, in Saudi Arabia, "every aspect of women's treatment […] is constrained by the cage of norms forged by the Saud-Wahhab pact" (ibid, p. 381). As another example of oppressive norms, racism in the United States has repeatedly been declared a public health crisis.[45] In the absence of state power, it is possible that such norms will become even more oppressive.

In sum, decentralization can yield either a net gain or a net loss in equal liberty. As Treisman (2007, p. 274) explains, "it is hard to reach any general conclusions about whether […] decentralization will improve or impair the quality of government and economic performance." Because we cannot view the decentralized counterfactual in advance, "we do not know how dangerous life would be without states" (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 522). Thus, "Decentralizing government in a particular place and time is very much a leap in the dark" (Treisman, 2007, p. 274). The anarchist assumption that the dissolution of state power will be a net benefit to society, while plausible, downplays this uncertainty.

Indeed, prefigurative anarchism encounters a challenge identified early on by William Godwin (1756–1836), "the first to give a clear statement of anarchist principles" according to historian Peter Marshall (2010, p. 191).[46] On the one hand, Godwin (2009 [1796], p. 388) recognized the state as "the only perennial cause of the vices of mankind." On the other hand, Godwin suggested that a certain level of

[45] Vestal, C. (2020, June 15). *Racism is a Public Health Crisis, Say Cities and Counties*. The Pew Charitable Trusts. https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2020/06/15/racism-is-a-public-health-crisis-say-cities-and-counties

[46] Also indicative of Godwin's importance as an early anarchist philosopher, Kramnick (1972, p. 123) refers to Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* as, "the bible of anarchism." Woodcock (1962, p. 44) credits Godwin and Proudhon with developing the philosophy of anarchism, and Bakunin with creating the first anarchist movement.

rationality must be diffused across society if the dissolution of state power was to yield a net reduction in violence. This tradeoff is implicitly recognized, for instance, in the following passage from *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*: "[S]ince government, even in its best state, is an evil, the object principally to be aimed at is that we should have as little of it as the general peace of human society will permit" (Godwin, 2009 [1796], p. 143). Thus, Godwin "was left with the apparent dilemma of believing that human beings cannot become wholly rational as long as government exists, and yet government must continue to exist while they remain irrational" (Marshall, 2010, p. 219).[47]

In an article on philosophical anarchism, Nathan Jun (2016, p. 565) explains that opposition to hierarchical institutions "need not imply an 'all or nothing' commitment to abolishing all such institutions and relationships at once." However, the prefigurative prohibition on a transitionary state does seem to necessitate that, within the context of the prefigurative revolutionary cycle described above, government ultimately be toppled in a single insurrectionary moment. As Woodcock (1962, pp. 31–2) explains, "It may indeed be impossible for society to move in one step to complete freedom, but the anarchist believes that he should accept no less as his aim." Similarly, Sagris asserts that "Every step you take towards freedom becomes an obstacle to going further. Democracy itself is an obstacle."[48] And according to Laursen (2021, p. 15), the distinctive feature of anarchists is their view that "Shaking off the State […] is the job *now*." This all-or-nothing approach to anarchism downplays the uncertainties of decentralization described above and thus fails to adequately address the mainstream Hobbesian concern about bad anarchy. In what follows I describe a gradualist alternative, which more effectively addresses this concern.

2.4 Gradualist Anarchism

Gradualist Versus Prefigurative Anarchism

The gradualist argument outlined below departs from traditional (prefigurative) anarchism, not necessarily with regard to the need for revolutionary change, but on the question of how best to advance equal liberty after a successful social revolution, in what we might refer to as an era of anarchism.[49] To be clear, the following

[47] Malatesta (2015, p. 178) identifies a similar dilemma in the following passage: "Men make society what it is and society makes men what they are, and the result is therefore a kind of vicious circle. To transform society men must be changed, and to transform men, society must be changed."

[48] Sagris, T. (n.d.). *Destination Anarchy! Every Step is an Obstacle*. CrimethInc. Retrieved December 23, 2017, from https://crimethinc.com/2016/04/07/feature-destination-anarchy-every-step-is-an-obstacle

[49] Similarly, John Clark (2019, p. 18) uses the term *Eleutherocene* in reference to an "era of a liberated humanity and a liberated Earth."

discussion aims to establish some guideposts for social progress in an egalitarian (postclass) context following a successful social revolution. In contrast to prefigurative anarchism's emphasis on evading the state (e.g., via autonomous zones), the gradualist anarchist vision proceeds through the heart of society, skewering the state rather than evading it, and aiming to strike that balance between formal (state-based) and informal (non-state) institutions, which maximizes equal liberty.[50]

In *The Art of Not Being Governed*, James Scott (2009, p. 324) observes that "In the contemporary world, the future of our freedom lies in the daunting task of taming Leviathan, not evading it." Similarly, Acemoglu and Robinson (2019, p. 27) argue that "In the same way that the Leviathan can shackle the Texan gunmen, so that they cannot do harm to ordinary citizens, it can itself be shackled [by society…] the shackles prevent it from rearing its fearsome face." By contrast, the argument presented here emphasizes the goal of achieving genuinely good government whose commands "reflect the moral law" (Crowder, 1992, p. 179), rather than having to tame or constantly check governments tending toward despotism.[51]

If despotic tendencies were indeed "written into the DNA" of states, they could not be consciously used as instruments for anarchist progress. However, the tendency toward despotism exhibited thus far by both authoritarian and democratic states in the modern era could reflect the current stage of history, rather than something inherent to states. It is here argued that, after a successful social revolution, states can contribute not unwittingly but consciously to anarchist progress. What follows is a brief review of examples of gradualism (both prefigurative and statist) in anarchist theory and praxis, before turning to this book's gradualist framework.

Gradualism in Anarchist Thought

Permutations of Gradualist Anarchism

As was previously mentioned, gradualism has been a common feature in the history of anarchist thought. One can identify a few distinct permutations of gradualist anarchism, which can be distinguished by their answers to some basic strategic questions. One such question is: should we aim to gradually replace the state without revolution, or strive for revolutionary change? As Wayne Price observes, some anarchists have favored the former approach:

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[50] The nation-state is sometimes viewed as at the heart of contemporary society. For instance, Proudhon described government as "but the reflection of society" (quoted in Graham, 2015, p. 26). The heart of a society can also be located in a sub-national autonomous zone. For instance, Clark (2019, p. 104) refers to the "big collective heart" of the Zapatistas.

[51] Acemoglu and Robinson (2019) describe liberal democracy (or the "shackled Leviathan") as existing in a "narrow corridor" where a precarious balance of power between state and society has been achieved. This balance is maintained via a "Red Queen" effect, in that society must constantly strive to hold Leviathan in check.

> [G]radual change without confronting the state […] was advocated generations ago by certain anarchists. It was the program of Proudhon, the person who first called himself an 'anarchist.' It was advocated by Gustav Landauer. The history of this idea can be found in Martin Buber's *Paths in Utopia*. In the 60s this was raised by Paul Goodman. This was part of the program of Murray Bookchin's libertarian municipalism.[52]

Other gradualist anarchists have favored revolutionary change, but disagree over whether gradualist processes should occur before and/or after the revolution. Gradualist anarchist perspectives can also be distinguished according to whether they strictly adhere to prefigurative principle (what I've called "prefigurative gradualism"), or have indicated some openness to instrumental uses of state power. In what follows I will provide a brief survey of these perspectives, before turning to my own unified gradualist perspective.

Prefigurative (Non-state) Gradualism

Examples of gradualist anarchism can be traced back to classical anarchist thought. Notably, William Godwin preferred "a process of gradual enlightenment over direct action and insurrection" (Graham, 2015, p. 17). Like Godwin's anarchist philosophy, Proudhon's mutualism has been described as "a reformist and gradualist strategy" (Shannon et al., 2012, p. 28).[53] Contrasting Proudhon and Bakunin, Graham (2015, p. 4) explains that "Where [Bakunin] differed from Proudhon was in [Bakunin's] advocacy of insurrection and expropriation and in his rejection of Proudhon's view that capitalism and the state could be gradually supplanted."

Also relevant, Errico Malatesta had developed a "mature gradualist view" by the 1920s (Turcato, 2009), and his anarchism is "typically referred to as gradualism" (Lundström, 2018, p. 61). Prior to a social revolution, Malatesta saw value in concessions gained by pressuring lawmakers through protests, strikes, or direct action, without getting directly involved in state-based politics. This aspect of Malatesta's strategy is summarized by Ferretti, Ince, and White (2020, p. 144) as follows:

> [A]narchism does not reject improvements in workers' well-being or in civil liberties that might be obtained under the bourgeois society: yet, they can effectively occur only if they are the result of radical action from below, and should never be conceded only though parliamentary negotiation.

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[52] Price, W. (2006). *An Anarchist Review of* Change the World Without Taking Power *by John Holloway*. The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/wayne-price-an-anarchist-review-of-change-the-world-without-taking-power-by-john-holloway

[53] Raekstad and Gradin (2020, p. 22) describe Proudhon's strategy as prefigurative-gradualist in nature: "Rejecting class struggle, Proudhon advocated peaceful revolution through the growth of cooperatives and mutual banks, which would gradually grow into the new society, replacing capitalism. In other words, Proudhon offered an early version of the idea that social change happens through establishing desired practices in the here-and-now, rather than taking place through a state-led revolution."

Malatesta also envisioned that, following a successful revolution, gradualism would be characterized by a pluralist landscape of experiments in (non-state) local governance, allowing best practices to be learned and adopted (Price, 2013, p. 171).

Turning to the global south, Ostergaard (1972, pp. 181–2) described the anarchistic Sarvodayite independence movement in India as, "convinced gradualists [who] see the anarchist goal in much the same way as Godwin did, as something to be reached only after men have become more perfect than they now are." However, the movement also adhered to the prefigurative assertion that no moral end can result from immoral means and that "there is no transition period." More recently, in his book *The Ecology of Freedom*, Bookchin (2005, p. 57) described "gradual confederalism" as "the step-by-step formation of civic networks that can ultimately challenge the growing power of the nation-state."

Gradualism with Statist Participation

Constitutional Design

Examples of gradualism more open to instrumental uses of state power (closer to the way I use the term gradualism in this book) can also be found in the history of anarchist thought. I will distinguish here between participation in constitutional design, electoral and reformist participation, and statist participation after a revolution, beginning with the former. As an early example of anarchist participation in constitutional design, Belgian socialist César de Paepe, at the Brussels Congress of the First International in 1874, argued in favor of an "an-archic state" which would provide public services within a libertarian framework (Berry, 2017, p. 200).[54] However, "De Paepe's position was opposed by several delegates" (Graham, 2015, p. 211), and "[m]ost of the libertarians […saw de Paepe's proposed] 'workers' state' turning inevitably into an 'authoritarian state'" (Guérin, 1970, p. 62).

Meanwhile, Pi y Margall, "the principal inspirer of Spanish federalism, and the most devoted of Proudhonian apostles" (Woodcock, 1962, p. 357) became president during the First Spanish Republic in 1873. The Spanish Constitution drafted under Margall promoted federalism, the allocation of uncultivated land to peasants, and the separation of Church and State, among other progressive reforms. More recently, Kinna, Prichard, and Swann have suggested that anarchistic procedures such as "constitutionalizing" – that is, popular involvement in the shaping of political institutions – can be fruitfully applied at the state level, as with Iceland's crowd-sourced constitution in 2012.[55]

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[54] de Paepe, C. (2018, March 20). *The Present Institutions of the International from the Point of View of the Future (1896)*. The Libertarian Labyrinth. https://www.libertarian-labyrinth.org/working-translations/the-present-institutions-of-the-international-from-the-point-of-view-of-the-future-1869/

[55] Kinna, R., Prichard, A., & Swann, T. (2016, October 28). *Iceland's crowd-sourced constitution: hope for disillusioned voters everywhere*. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/

Electoral and/or Reformist Participation

Another type of state-oriented gradualism calls for electoral and/or reformist participation. For instance, during the World War I era in the United States (US), IWW organizer Bill Haywood "argued that election of socialists to the various local governments could help provide a more favorable local environment for organizing unions – by keeping the police neutral in strikes, for example" (Wetzel, 2022, pp. 226–7). Also in the United States, Paul Goodman (writing in the 1960s), "was a reformist, advocating a gradual approach to social change in the present society" (Price, 2013, p. 174). Goodman's view contrasted with that of Malatesta, who favored (non-state) gradualism *after* a revolution (ibid).

In a similar vein, Barry Pateman (2009, p. 9) refers to Noam Chomsky's "claim that the state can be used to move towards a more equitable anarchical society." Indicative of this gradualist perspective, in describing anarchism Chomsky (2009 [1995], p. 178) has argued that "I think it only makes sense to seek out and identify structures of authority, hierarchy, and domination in every aspect of life, and to challenge them: unless a justification for them can be given, they are illegitimate, and should be dismantled, to increase the scope of human freedom." The gradualist element in this statement is, of course, that even in the case of state institutions, "sometimes the burden can be met." More recently, Chomsky referred to the "remarkable success of the [Bernie] Sanders mobilization" in 2016 as a hopeful sign (Albert, 2017, p. xiii). Similarly, according to Michael Albert (2012, p. 339), "To say it can never make anarchist sense to be involved in presidential electoral politics is not just inflexible and sectarian, it is also wrong."

Meanwhile, Ben Franks (2020) has argued that some minor forms of mainstream political participation (for example, using an electoral campaign to promote anarchist causes) could also be viewed as prefigurative (as long as they are equal liberty maximizing, do not replace direct action, and remain critical of representation), and thus consistent with anarchism. Drawing upon his experience as an elected councilor and citizen activist in Savonlinna, Finland, Condit (2019) argues that participation in municipal governance can potentially contribute to anarchist progress. Also relevant, Raekstad and Gradin (2020, p. 127) suggest that revolutionary national governments can potentially support anarchism by promoting bottom-up prefigurative efforts.[56]

icelands-crowd-sourced-constitution-hope-for-disillusioned-voters-everywhere-67803

[56] In Chap. 8, I will refer to cases where an anarchistic state assists bottom-up prefigurative efforts as a type of hybrid strategy.

Statist Participation *After* Revolution

Some gradualist anarchist perspectives seem open to statist participation during or after a social revolution. During the Spanish Civil War, for example, anarchist leaders from the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT) and the *Federación Anarquista Ibérica* (FAI) entered into the governments of Catalonia in September of 1936, and Madrid in December of 1936 (Woodcock, 1962, p. 391). In his account of the Spanish Civil War, Evans (2020, pp. 8–9) describes a three-way division within the anarchist movement between *gradualists* (who sought to remold society rather than immediately overturning capitalism), *voluntarists* (who promoted insurrection), and *purists* (who prioritized propagandistic and cultural work).

During the post-World War II era, a *Recortes* leaflet of the *Federación Anarquista Uruguaya* (FAU) argued that "political power is not easily destroyed and therefore anarchists should not refuse to collaborate in the central power during the first stage after the revolution. It should also take the key political decision-making positions in order to avoid the danger of centralist groups moving in to fill the power vacuum and thus frustrating low-level self-management." Given such positions, the FAU was viewed as "moving towards Marxism" (Colombo, 1972, pp. 241–2).

Gustav Landauer (1870–1919) argued that when the time is right, the state should aim to "prepare for its own abolition and to make way for the endless ordered multiplicity of federations, organizations, and societies that aspire to take its place" (quoted in Clark, 2019, p. 138). More recently, John Clark (2019, p. 138) "points to the need for an anarchist politics of the transitional state." However, Clark adds that "Whether such a transitional state is in any particular case a revolutionary or counterrevolutionary force is a historical and empirical question, and cannot be an article of faith."[57]

In Sum: Toward a Unified Gradualist Perspective

While examples of gradualism can be found throughout the history of anarchist theory and praxis (many of which I've just reviewed), this tendency has yet to be explicitly incorporated into a comprehensive theoretical framework alongside traditional prefigurative anarchist approaches. Thus, in the words of Guriev and Treisman (2022, p. 13), I aim to build on these ideas, to synthesize and integrate them, suggesting an overarching logic, while also disagreeing in ways. Like Malatesta's gradualism, libertarian social democracy (this book's argument) prioritizes revolutionary

[57] On the one hand, my book can be viewed as fulfilling the task Clark refers to (developing an "anarchist politics of the transitional state"). On the other hand, my emphasis on the possibility of an egalitarian democratic transitionary state might be viewed as an article of faith, and thus vulnerable to Clark's critique. However, this book also promotes empirical comparisons across different types of political institutions to assess, which are most conducive to anarchist progress. In that sense, this book could be seen as echoing Clark's admonition, rather than violating it. This point is brought up again in the Concluding chapter of this book.

change, followed by a period of gradualist anarchism. However, after the revolution, the argument favors reformist participation and (echoing Godwin's cautious gradualism) decentralizing steps toward anarchy when this is equal liberty maximizing. In what follows I further develop this framework, focusing on the elements of gradualist anarchism: just law, consensus, and decentralization.

Elements of Gradualist Anarchism: Just Law, Consensus, and Decentralization

Consensus and Coercion

While consensus is often viewed as central to anarchism (e.g., Clark, 2019, pp. 115–6), anarchists also emphasize the benefits of disagreement. For example, Murray Bookchin observed that consensus-based decision-making "precludes dissensus – the all important process of continual dialogue, disagreement, challenge, and counter-challenge, without which social as well as individual creativity would be impossible."[58] In addition, Maeckelbergh (2012) has argued that mass movements should embrace contestation and difference, as the insistence on agreement tends to repress diversity and freedom. Although not considered anarchist theorizing, Mouffe's (2013) notion of agonistic democracy also seems to question the possibility of genuine consensus, instead recognizing politics as a terrain upon which divisions over a range of essentially contested issues manifest, and political parties struggle among each other for hegemonic control of state power.[59]

On the other hand, several authors have recognized that in the absence of consensus, there may be some need for coercion. For instance, according to Yves Simon (1973, p. 23), "authority finds its *raison d'être* in the need to assure common action when the answer to the question of what to do cannot be objectively demonstrated." In a similar vein, Wilson (2011, p. 136) comments that "Coercion, of one sort or another, is the inevitable consequence of unresolved disagreements." Furthermore, according to Gelderloos (2010, p. 61), "Consensus precludes the need for enforcement and punishment by making sure that everyone is satisfied beforehand." Also, although not himself an anarchist, Osgood (1889, p. 19) states plausibly that "As long as there are individuals so imperfect that they insist upon infringing their neighbor's rights, they must be restrained."

An alternative vision advanced by proponents of market anarchism – polycentric legal orders – envisions a society composed of geographically overlapping legal regimes with voluntary membership (Chartier, 2013, p. 408). However, as Michael

[58] Bookchin, M. (1995). *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*. The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/murray-bookchin-social-anarchism-or-lifestyle-anarchism-an-unbridgeable-chasm

[59] For instance, Mouffe (2013, p. 139) asserts that "politics needs to be partisan" and adversarial along the left-right dimension, broadly interpreted.

Albert (2017, p. 98) notes, "you can't decide a dispute or arrive at a law using different procedures for some folks than for others if all are involved in the same situation." Kevin Carson states plausibly that, where agreement on a common policy is necessary, "the next best thing to unanimous consent is that all individuals involved in the decision encounter each other as equals."[60]

Informal Norms Versus State Coercion

Assuming the need for some collective decision-making in the political realm (i.e., over public policy), consistent with prefigurative strategy, anarchists have generally emphasized the need to use informal (non-state) rather than formal (state-based) means of coercion.[61] Wayne Price clarifies that "The goal of anarchism is not to have absolutely no coercion. It is to abolish the state" (see also Wetzel, 2022, p. 99).[62] One informal anarchist mechanism is *the stand aside*, where dissenters exit a jurisdiction upholding rules or norms with which they disagree. However, the costs of exit can be prohibitive for many, and those unable to leave a particular community may have no choice but to comply with the prevailing rules (Wilson, 2011, pp. 135–7).

Another informal mechanism is *diffuse sanctions*, a set of actions that do not rely on calling the police, filing a grievance, or waiting for someone else to do something. Using the example of someone who refuses to help clean the street, Gelderloos (2010, pp. 66–71) explains that the neighbors might apply direct criticism, ridicule, shunning, glaring, or for persistent anti-social behavior, expulsion from the group. Wilson (2011) emphasizes that even informal measures such as expulsion imply limits on freedom.[63] Wilson thus questions how free an anarchic society would truly be. Wilson's point draws our attention to the possibility that both formal laws and

[60] Carson, K. (2017, June 12). *On Democracy as a Necessary Anarchist Value*. Center 4 Stateless Society. https://c4ss.org/content/49295

[61] In this chapter, the term (in)formal will be used in reference to (non-)state institutions. The term formal is not always used in this way. For instance, Wetzel (2022, p. 165) mentions "formal, democratic, participatory union organizations" in a non-state setting. On the other hand, the way I use the term is not uncommon. For instance, Elinor Ostrom (1990, Fig. 2.3) refers to formal collective choice arenas such as legislatures, regulatory agencies, and courts, while informal arenas include informal gatherings, appropriations teams, and private associations. Also, Zoltan Barany (2007, p. 7) writes that, "Along with institutionalists, I consider rules as formal institutions that are codified (such as laws and regulations). Norms, on the other hand, are informal institutions that are culturally based and accepted behavioral standards or customs reflected and reinforced by the organization's history."

[62] Price, W. (2016, July 15). *Are Anarchism and Democracy Opposed? A Response to CrimethInc*. The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/wayne-price-are-anarchism-and-democracy-opposed

[63] For example, in the autonomous zone of *Quartier Libre des Lentilleres*, near Dijon France, a small group who repeatedly accused the collective of racism was eventually asked to leave. In that case, many participants were "uncomfortable with the decision to exclude people, but also convinced that there was nothing else to do than take this emergency action" (King, 2020, p. 256).

informal rules and norms can limit freedom, similar to Acemoglu and Robinson's (2019) argument about "the cage of norms."

While both formal and informal coercion indicate some lack of freedom, there is also a substantial difference in the level of freedom between the two, ceteris paribus. Consider, for instance, the gain in freedom attributable to the absence of compulsory taxation (setting aside, for a moment, any loss in freedom attributable to a reduction in public services). Also, Gordon (2008, p. 68) makes the following point: "whereas diffuse social sanctions are indeed coercive, they are hardly something on which an edifice of *enforcement* could be built." Thus, we might describe a society governed only by informal practices as (at least potentially) *free*, and those where neither formal nor informal rules are needed to sustain equal liberty as *utopian*.[64]

Consensus and Just Law: What Needs to Be Agreed upon?

Just laws are defined here as those laws, which advance or at least do not undermine equal liberty.[65] The realization of equal liberty entails the maximization of (i) *self-government* – the extent to which individuals understand and voluntarily comply with just law – and (ii) *autonomy* – the extent to which individuals or political entities are free from formal (i.e., state-based) coercion. There are, of course, various types of laws that would be part of any comprehensive legal system. For instance, Hasnas (2008, p. 114) distinguishes between tort, property, contract, commercial, and criminal law. Ostrom (1990, p. 52) distinguishes between three levels of institutions from macro to micro: constitutional, collective choice, and operational rules. The discussion here will focus primarily on institutions at the constitutional and collective choice (public policy or statutory) levels.

If consensus is essential for equal liberty, what needs to be agreed upon? Can there be any hope of identifying objectively just laws around which a stable consensus might be established? It is here argued that the justness of a particular law or policy (i.e., its consistency with *equal liberty* – the most basic, objectively just

[64] Some examples can help to illustrate tipping points where less informal institutions become equal liberty maximizing. For instance, "In the early years of the [Rojava] revolution, to ensure a sense of stability and prevent the traumatized society from descending into arbitrariness, the need emerged to establish a [non-state] justice system" (Dirik, 2020, p. 217). Also, King (2020, p. 244) identifies a tipping point at which zones of encounter were replaced with (somewhat more) formal assemblies in *Quartier Libre des Lentilleres* near Dijon, France:

> In the early days, there were few, if any, formal forms of collective organization. People didn't feel the need. The project was small and homogenous enough, and the people involved were connected enough, for communication to flow more or less 'freely'. Yet at a certain point, the project reached a size, diversity, and complexity that necessitated more formal means of talking together: the assembly generale was the result.

[65] In his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr. also distinguished between just laws (which one has a moral responsibility to obey) and unjust law (which one has a moral responsibility to disobey) (White, 2016, p. 61).

social end) ranges from certain to "essentially contested" (Gallie, 1956). In the case of essential contestation, reasonable parties acting in good faith disagree over which outcome is more conducive to the public good. Thus, essential contestation should not be confused with cases where groups seeking to advance their own private interests engage in strategic opposition.

At the more certainly just end of the spectrum is a need for widespread agreement on a basic set of individual rights and a commitment to non-aggression.[66] For example, it is quite clear that the 1954 US Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* – and subsequent enforcement of the ruling by President Eisenhower (MacLean, 2017, p. 55) – was more justified than allowing racial segregation in public schools to continue (Scott, 2012, pp. xiii-xiv).[67] If one side is clearly more justified than the other – from behind a Rawlsian veil of ignorance[68] – then there is a need to build consensus on the more just outcome and to police those acting unjustly in the meantime. In such cases, the use of coercion may yield a higher net level of equal liberty than the alternative of allowing local governments to violate the rights of their own citizens or neighbors. In other words, the enforcement of certainly just laws (with due process) is itself justified.[69]

At the other end of the spectrum, one can also find examples of essentially contested issues. For example, Valentini (2013, pp. 184–5) explains that "some favor proportional taxation on grounds of liberty, others campaign for progressive taxation on grounds of equality. Since neither view obviously violates equal respect, they are both reasonable, and hence worthy of consideration." Another essentially contested issue concerns the correct level of deficit spending (Krugman, 2020, p. 153). More generally, James Scott (2012, p. xvi) asserts that "Reasonable people can disagree about the levels of inequality that a democracy can tolerate without

[66] The term non-aggression is used broadly here in reference to freedom from arbitrary rule, wanton attacks, invasion, domestic repression, et cetera. Some on the left appear to associate the principle of non-aggression with market anarchism and reject the principle on the grounds that it hinders class struggle. However, the current discussion is focusing on a post-class setting wherein anarchistic objectives have become the prevailing normative position of society.

[67] Right-wing opposition to the Brown decision emphasized property rights and argued that federally imposed school desegregation was a sign of creeping socialist infringements on liberty (MacLean, 2017, p. 53).

[68] To engage in political deliberation from behind a "veil of ignorance" is to do so without concern for (or "ignorant" of) one's own narrow self-interest on the topic, focusing instead on which outcome would best serve the public good.

[69] This discussion begs the following question: Who should have the last word on what is or is not just law? Discussing the case of Rojava, Dilar Dirik (2020, p. 216) refers to this as "the question of the origin of authority." The short answer suggested here is: A majority of the public (or their delegates) should determine policy outcomes, ideally from behind a Rawlsian veil of ignorance and achieving a high level of consensus. But then, which democratic institutions will most closely approximate a veil of ignorance-like situation, where voters seek to promote the public good (rather than their own private interest)? In Chap. 7, I will focus on democratic institutional choices with that goal in mind. A Supreme or Constitutional Court might also serve as a final arbiter to determine whether a law is constitutional. (In Chap. 7 I will not focus on the judicial branch which is, like other topics, beyond the scope of this book).

becoming an utter charade." Similarly, according to Robert Reich (2015, p. 44), "Markets need rules for determining the degree to which economic power can be concentrated without damaging the system. But there's no obvious 'correct' answer."

Loyal Opposition and Equal Liberty Maximization

It is important to emphasize that *progressive decentralization* – that is, decentralization intended to maximize equal liberty – can still be successfully advanced, even with day-to-day disagreements over essentially contested political issues as well as more trivial or prosaic public policy matters. Such disagreements are to be expected, even after a successful social revolution. As John Rawls (1971, p. 196) explains, "A lack of unanimity is part of the circumstances of justice, since disagreement is bound to exist even among honest men who desire to follow much the same political principles."

What is needed is not unanimity on all matters of public policy (which is unrealistic and perhaps undesirable), but rather a more basic consensus favoring a just constitution and the principle of equal liberty enshrined therein. If a critical mass of genuine support for the basic principle of equal liberty is achieved and sustained, equal liberty can be advanced either by (i) devolving authority to sub-national assemblies (if just solutions are geographically divisible) or (ii) where the issue does require a unitary solution, majoritarian alternations in government at the central level.[70]

In the case of centralized political decisions, the need for formal law enforcement can still be minimized by sustaining a critical mass of *loyal opposition* to their partisan opponents (as opposed to *revolutionary opposition* to the just social contract itself). Similarly, Rawls (1971, p. 196) argues that "Without the conception of loyal opposition, and an attachment to constitutional rules which express and protect it, the politics of democracy cannot be properly conducted or long endure."[71] A norm of loyal opposition implies that parties defeated through free and fair elections

[70] For a discussion on the compatibility of majoritarianism and anarchism, see: Price, W. (2017, June 3). *Democracy, Anarchism, & Freedom*. Center 4 Stateless Society. https://c4ss.org/content/49237; Wittorff, D. (2017, June 4). *Democracy: Self-Government or Systemic Powerlessness?* Center 4 Stateless Society. https://c4ss.org/content/49249; Wilbur, S. (2017, June 6). *Anarchy and Democracy: Examining the Divide*. Center 4 Stateless Society. https://c4ss.org/content/49277

[71] During the Spanish Civil War (1936–9), some anarchists referred to participation with state politics as "collaboration" (Evans, 2020). However, it is here argued that, following a successful social revolution, participation in state politics would be participating in one's own social contract, rather than collaborating with an adversarial upper class. Within that context, my argument resembles the Kantian position that "liberty is acting in accordance with a law that we give ourselves. And this leads not to a morality of austere command but to an ethic of mutual respect and self-esteem" (paraphrased by Rawls, 1971, p. 225).

(and/or the legislative process) will voluntarily comply with the just laws they essentially contest.[72]

Defining Decentralization

In his book *The Architecture of Government*, Daniel Treisman (2007, Table 2.1), identifies three types of decentralization: administrative, political, and fiscal. *Administrative decentralization* exists where centrally planned policies are "implemented not by the central government directly but by locally based agents appointed by and subordinate to the central government." *Political decentralization* is broken down into two sub-types: decision-making decentralization (where "At least one subnational tier of government has exclusive authority to make decisions on at least one policy issue"), and appointment decentralization (where "Government officials at one or more subnational tiers are selected by local residents").[73] *Fiscal decentralization* is described as "Decisionmaking decentralization on tax or expenditure issues" in which case "Subnational governments account for a large share of total government revenues or spending."

The nature of the political issue or public service – i.e., whether or not it is geographically divisible – will determine which type of decentralization is possible. With regard to issues or services for which solutions are geographically divisible, both political and fiscal decentralization are theoretically possible. On the other hand, according to Paul Goodman, some functions, such as air traffic control, "are central by their nature" (Stoer, 1994, p. 151). In the case of inherently centralized services, fiscal decentralization can still be achieved if increases in volunteerism are followed by a reduction in taxes at that level (more on this possibility in Chap. 3).

Consensus and Decentralization: Consolidating Gains in Equal Liberty

The decentralization of power is often recognized as central to anarchism. For example, John Clark (1978) suggests that anarchism itself "might be defined as a theory of decentralization."[74] Over the longer-term, the full decentralization of power would entail the following at some level of government: the dissolution of

[72] One potential issue with a democratic transitionary state that I have not addressed is the so-called "implementation gap" between the spirit of a law as intended by the assembly, and how that statute is actually implemented by public agencies and street-level bureaucrats (Condit, 2019, pp. 148–9). Where the implementation gap threatens equal liberty, one solution might be to draft more detailed legislation to limit the scope for interpretation.

[73] In Treisman's typology, the existence of both sub-types of political decentralization – decision-making and appointment decentralization – is indicative of a federal political system.

[74] As was explained in a Chap. 1 footnote, I assume that decentralization from a central to a mid- or local level is inherently more conducive to individual autonomy than keeping sovereignty entirely at the central level. It was argued that, because the sub-national units will tend to have less variance in their ideological distribution (i.e., more homogeneity of policy preferences), the average ideo-

inessential public agencies (administrative), winnowing out excessive laws and policies (political), and the sustainment of any laws, policies, or organizations via voluntary contributions in labor and other resources, and an end to compulsory taxation (fiscal). In other words, decentralization can be understood as a transformation from formal to informal governance.[75]

Decentralization (or recentralization) can occur on a policy-by-policy basis as well as, when the time is right, completely dissolving (or re-establishing) an entire tier of formal government.[76] An example of full decentralization (or dissolution) is the peaceful breakup of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993 (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 89). The re-establishment of an entire tier of formal government might also be described as the establishment of a social contract, though possibly lacking unanimous consent.[77]

Although power remained centered at the national-level, an example of a policy-by-policy approach to decentralization can be found in Sweden's "free commune" experiments, which eventually spread to Denmark, Norway, and Finland (Gallagher et al., 2011, p. 185). In that case, Sweden "allowed certain municipalities to be designated as free communes, allowed to make proposals to opt out of national laws in certain specified policy areas […such as] land-use planning, the organization of local administration, fees and services charges (in Norway), and education (in Denmark)." This policy-by-policy approach bears some resemblance to Kristian Williams' (2018, p. 50) suggestion that "our opposition to the state would probably need to become less total and more strategic – not so much a smashing as a dismantling, with specified pieces to be recycled or repurposed."

According to Newman (2001, p. 25), "The state, for anarchists, is *a priori* oppression, no matter what form it takes." I agree with this argument, in the sense that even good governments (i.e., those sincerely interested in promoting just law) rely on

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logical distance between representative and citizen will be smaller as one scales down from central to increasingly local levels.

[75] This description of decentralization resembles the transition from the Weberian system of administrative government, to the post-1970s "New Public Management" neoliberal style of governance in Europe. According to José Magone (2019, p. 170), "government is quite formalised, while governance includes both formal and informal elements." The key difference between New Public Management and the progressive decentralization described in this chapter is that the latter would aim to informalize the public sector, not by privatizing it, but by dissolving its compulsory aspects.

[76] Using the example of the Spanish Civil War, Evans (2020, p. 230) refers to, "state reconstruction as the essential dynamic by which revolutionary energies are coopted and revolutionary phenomena shut down." By contrast, it is here argued that participation in the established political system (including recentralization) can potentially be more conducive to equal liberty than strict adherence to prefiguration.

[77] Anarchists have traditionally argued that the contemporary nation-state is more accurately understood as an occupying power than a social contract (Newman, 2012, p. 312). However, I am describing the possibilities of a democratic transitionary state in a post-revolution, post-class context. Some anarchists have also used the term social contract. For instance, Dirik (2020, p. 216), refers to "the social contract of Rojava (published in January 2014)." I return to the topic of consent and social contract in Chap. 4.

state coercion (to uphold the legal system) and thus limit autonomy.[78] Thus, even under good government, a fuller realization of equal liberty requires progressive decentralization. For example, in contemporary Sweden, "while the constitution guarantees the political and financial autonomy of the municipalities, it also stipulates that welfare provision is based on equity and equal access" (Gallagher et al., p. 187). In that case, assuming the "equity and equal access" rule is a just policy, a gain in equal liberty would be achieved if the national government stopped enforcing it, and yet the local governments continued to abide by it.

As discussed above, given their long-standing commitment to prefiguration, anarchists have tended to favor the abolition of all government at once, albeit in the context of the longer-term prefigurative revolutionary cycle. Such a radical transformation would coincide with immense gains in autonomy (i.e., freedom from central government), but not necessarily a commensurate increase in self-government (i.e., voluntary compliance with just law). Whether the enhancement of autonomy via decentralization yields a net gain in equal liberty will depend on the extent to which self-government has been diffused across the community, as well as the ability of that community to contain any remaining aggressive individuals without the assistance of a central government. A similar observation was made, for instance, in Proudhon's *Principle of Federalism* (1979 [1863], p. 49), in which he writes: "[T]he policy of federation, essentially the policy of progress, consists in ruling every people, at any given moment, by decreasing the sway of authority and central power to the point permitted by the level of consciousness and morality."[79]

Suppose that in a hypothetical polity, a supermajority of local governments was nonaggressive (toward their own citizens as well as neighboring localities) and that aggressive local governments were relatively few in number. In that case, it is conceivable that the nonaggressive majority could successfully contain the aggressive minority without the assistance of the central power. (Suppose also that these local governments were able to maintain essential public services and collective security against external threats). Under such ideal circumstances, power could be decentralized to the local level, thereby deepening the autonomy of the community and consolidating a tier's worth of gain in equal liberty.

However, as self-government declines, the need for centralized institutions may again arise.[80] For instance, if too many local governments become captured by

[78] An early use of the term *good government* is found in the title of a fresco painting in Siena, Italy's Piazza del Campo, created by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in 1338–9: *Allegory of Good Government*. However, even in that depiction Leviathan is made good by being shackled (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019, ch. 5).

[79] Though not himself an anarchist, a similar observation is made by Friedrich Hayek in *The Constitution of Liberty* (2011 [1960], p. 123): "Coercion, then, may sometimes be avoidable only because a high degree of voluntary conformity exists, which means that voluntary conformity may be a condition of a beneficial working of freedom."

[80] James Buchanan (2000 [1975], p. 8), in *The Limits of Liberty*, makes a similar observation: "To the extent that more and more human interactions exhibit conflicts at the boundaries, institutional means for resolving these will emerge, and the set of formalized rules expand. If men abide by rules implicitly, formalization is not required."

private interests (resulting in severe inequalities and/or rights violations), recentralization at the national level may once again become more conducive to anarchist progress than the decentralized condition. While this would be a step away from the long-term goal of anarchy, recentralization should not be viewed as the failure of anarchism writ large so long as (i) a critical mass of governments at the highest level of formal government remains committed to equal liberty amidst the ebbs and flows of decentralization and (ii) prefigurative anarchist movements at the mass level remain active (to prepare the community for the eventual realization of anarchy).

When Should Power Be Decentralized?

How do we know when progressive decentralization will actually yield a net gain in equal liberty? While we cannot view the decentralized counterfactual in advance, and thus cannot say for certain, there are some indicators that might prove useful. According to Treisman (2007, p. 294), "The probability of an improvement [following decentralization] must depend, in part, on how 'good' or 'bad' the starting point is." For instance, when consensual policy making (on just law) becomes sufficiently routinized, this suggests an opportunity to consolidate gains in equal liberty. For example, according to Bale (2017, p. 92), "[Sweden's] policy system is famously consensual *to the point of being cumbersome*" (emphasis added).

Another example is found on the topic of electoral participation. Voter turnout in the Benelux countries has been very high (often over 80%), in part because of compulsory voting. According to Jose Magone (2019, p. 311), "Although failing to vote will lead to sanctions, in reality in the case of Luxembourg no one has been punished since 1964. It seems that for all three countries it has become *a taken for granted obligation* that was passed on from generation to generation" (emphasis added). When compliance with a law becomes sufficiently routinized, to the point of being cumbersome, or taken for granted, the time is arguably ripe for informalization. (I revisit the question of when to decentralize power in Chap. 4).

Avoiding Bad Government After the Revolution

Skepticism About Transitionary States

Using states as instruments of anarchism will require good governments that are genuinely interested in advancing equal liberty. There are plausible grounds for skepticism about this requirement. In his book *Anatomies of Revolution*, Lawson (2019, p. 36) observes that "in order to function as states, revolutionary states are forced to give up many of their revolutionary aims." Anarchists are usually skeptical about the possibility of good government. For instance, Dupuis-Déri (2016) has argued that the existence of any state presupposes a division between governing and governed classes. Lucien van der Walt, paraphrasing Bakunin, writes, "the logic of

the state is antithetical to the logic of participatory democracy and self-management."[81] However, as was mentioned previously, the despotic tendencies exhibited by governments could reflect the current stage of history rather than immutable state characteristics.

To be sure, in the current context of neoliberal and liberal democratic inequality, it would be unrealistic to expect a ruling class to reform away their positions of power. However, even in an egalitarian context after a successful revolution, can a democratic, anarchistic society evade Robert Michel's infamous "iron law of oligarchy"? Newman (2011, p. 84) captures this fear well stating, "The revolutionary – despite his or her best intentions – will get caught up in the cult of power and authority, and will come to depend on the state's mechanisms more and more; and we will soon find that the temporary state is now a permanent and increasingly oppressive presence in post-revolutionary society."

Doubt is also expressed, for instance, by Kevin Carson, who writes: "the idea that anything remotely resembling genuine democracy can be achieved through the government of a nation-state of tens or hundreds of millions of people is beyond the bounds of credulity. At best, the nation-state will be a class state whose aid to ruling class rent extraction is limited and partially offset by mass pressure."[82] A third example is found in the writing of Paul Goodman, who observed that "In ordinary usage, of course, including both liberal and Marxist usage, the word *revolution* has meant […] that a new regime establishes itself and reorganizes the institutions according to its own ideas and interests. (To anarchists this is precisely the counter-revolution, because there is again a centralizing authority to oppose)" (Stoer, 1994, p. 17).

A Transitionary State Can Work Under the Right Conditions

Traditionally, anarchists have held that "the state […] *necessarily* concentrates power in the hands of the few, and defends the class system in the interests of […] the ruling class."[83] By contrast, it is here argued that after a successful social revolution, it is conceivable that a democratic state can be used – not unwittingly, but *consciously* – to consolidate gains in equal liberty. Specifically, the risk of state capture can be minimized with a set of carefully chosen democratic political

[81] van der Walt, L. (2011, April 7). *Detailed reply to International Socialism: debating power and revolution in anarchism, Black Flame and historical Marxism*. Lucien van der Walt Blogspot. https://lucienvanderwalt.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/van-der-walt-detailed-reply-to-international-socialism.pdf

[82] Carson, K. (2017, June 12). *On Democracy as a Necessary Anarchist Value*. Center 4 Stateless Society. https://c4ss.org/content/49295

[83] van der Walt, L. (2011, April 7). *Detailed reply to International Socialism: debating power and revolution in anarchism, Black Flame and historical Marxism*. Lucien van der Walt Blogspot. https://lucienvanderwalt.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/van-der-walt-detailed-reply-to-international-socialism.pdf

institutions, relative socioeconomic equality, and an anarchistic culture conducive to the pursuit of equal liberty (these objectives are discussed in Chap. 7). This argument runs parallel to that of Schmidt and van der Walt (2009, p. 189) who note that "democratic and decentralized structures, plus a strongly democratic culture among the rank and file, act as checks on oligarchic tendencies."

According to Flannigan, "The question is whether any available institutional mechanisms for collective decision-making could ever [promote human freedom]."[84] I have argued "yes" and emphasize this follow-up question: What types of political institutions will be most conducive to the elements of gradualist anarchism: Just law, consensus, and decentralization? In Chap. 7, I focus on revolutionary objectives, including an argument for a more proportional system of representation in the United States. This emphasis on the importance of institutional choices contrasts with the perspectives of classical anarchists such as Bakunin who was skeptical about the capacity of institutional mechanisms, such as parliamentarian wages and recall elections, to improve the behavior of public officials (Schmidt & van der Walt, 2009, p. 55).

When to Revert to Revolutionary Strategy

After a successful social revolution, how many problematic signs must a government exhibit before a fully prefigurative and/or revolutionary strategy again becomes optimal for the pursuit of equal liberty? On the one hand, according to Gordon (2008, p. 44), contemporary anarchism stresses the importance of "dissent even after the abolition of capitalism and government […Becoming] a revolutionary within the revolution," and adds that "the price of eternal liberty is eternal vigilance." From that perspective, one should never fully accept even an anarchistic transitionary state. On the other hand, a democratic transitionary state can more effectively promote progressive decentralization if it enjoys widespread legitimacy in an anarchistic culture (that is, where loyal opposition prevails over revolutionary opposition).

Still, there must be some tipping point beyond which revolutionary (rather than loyal) opposition again becomes equal liberty maximizing, at which point one should withdraw their acceptance of the transitionary state. According to Rawls (1971, p. 310), "When laws and policies deviate from publicly recognized standards […e.g.] when a society is regulated by principles favoring narrow class interests, one may have no recourse but to oppose the prevailing conception and the institutions it justifies in such ways as promise some success."[85] In such cases, the public

[84] Flannigan, J. (2017, June 18). *Politics and Anarchist Ideals*. Center 4 Stateless Society. https://c4ss.org/content/49391

[85] Like the Rawlsian social contract, the democratic transitionary state would be a just state aiming to maximize equal liberty (albeit more radically through the advancement of progressive decentralization).

again encounters the formidable challenge of revolutionary collective action (discussed in Part II).

2.5 Conclusion

In his book *After Post-Anarchism,* Rousselle (2012, p. 186) identifies an "innermost outside" of the anarchist tradition in reference to that which "many have felt the need to define as 'anarchistic' so as to describe something which is almost anarchist." Most anarchists would probably place the idea of a democratic transitionary state in the non-anarchist space or at best the innermost outside, as a prefigurative principle is still widely recognized as a cornerstone of anarchist ontology. For instance, Price asserts that "[anarchists] do not believe in the possibility of a 'transitional state' or a 'workers' state'."[86] However, as was argued in Chap. 1, anarchist ontology is compatible with both prefigurative and gradualist approaches (as defined here), yet only the former has been fully recognized and developed.

Up to now, gradualism (as defined in this chapter) has remained only a latent tendency within anarchist thought. In this chapter I have outlined a unifying gradualist framework that explicitly incorporates the use of state power as an instrument for anarchist progress, thereby revealing the full spectrum of anarchist strategy from prefigurative to gradualist. This holistic or comprehensive understanding of anarchism more effectively addresses mainstream concerns about bad anarchy, thus rendering it more suitable as an alternative paradigm at the societal level and helps to clarify the relationship between anarchism and mainstream political participation.

The argument presented in this chapter should not be interpreted as advocating greater participation in unequal democracies *today*, however. On the contrary, in Chap. 8, it will be argued that in unequal democracies such as the United States, revolutionary ("outsider") strategy (including prefigurative efforts) can make a higher net contribution to equal liberty than a reformist ("insider") strategy. Even so, successful anarchist strategizing in today's unequal context (the focus of Part II) will benefit from having a shared vision to apply in an egalitarian context *after* the revolution (which Part I of this book seeks to provide).

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[86] Price, W. (2017, June 3). *Democracy, Anarchism, & Freedom*. Center 4 Stateless Society. https://c4ss.org/content/49237

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Chapter 3
Anarchism in the Economic Realm



3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on libertarian social democracy in the political realm, characterized by a spectrum ranging from prefigurative to gradualist anarchism. In this chapter, I turn to libertarian social democracy in the economic realm. A vision of anarchist economics is described which, given its blend of public and private economic spheres, will be referred to as a libertarian mixed economy. Just as maximizing equal liberty in the political realm involves striking an equal liberty maximizing balance between formal and informal political institutions and striving for progressive decentralization, maximizing equal liberty in the economic realm involves striking an optimal balance between public and private economic spheres and applying libertarian principles to both.

This chapter begins by clarifying the terms "public," "private," and "mixed economy." It then argues that a mixed economy is essential to equal liberty, addressing the concerns of economic liberals and socialists about the public and private economic spheres, respectively. Following that, I turn to a discussion about balancing public and private spheres, suggesting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a baseline, and identifying some additional guideposts for balancing private property rights against economic rights. Next, I focus on the application of libertarian principles in the economic realm, including collective action problems in the public sphere, and contrasts between gradualist and prefigurative approaches.[1]

[1] It may be useful at this point to clarify this book's distinction between the political realm (Chap. 2) and the economic realm (Chap. 3), and how that distinction relates to the public and private economic spheres. The *political realm* here refers to laws, regulations, and legal procedures of the *demos* (i.e., the populace of a particular polity). The *economic realm* refers to the production and allocation of goods and services, by actors in either the public or private economic spheres (defined below). The laws, regulations, and policymaking procedures of the political realm are applied to the public economic sphere by definition but can also be applied more or less to the private eco-

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3.2 Terminology

Mixed Economy

Common After World War II

In the early-mid twentieth century, a compromise was reached in the West between socialists (who accepted a regulated market economy) and liberals and conservatives (who accepted some degree of social democracy). Thus, by the end of World War II, a cultural shift against the (economically) liberal *laissez faire* approach developed, and "People began to imagine forms of 'mixed economy'" (Piketty, 2020, p. 434). *Mixed economies* blend and/or combine public and private economic spheres and tend to grant each a more balanced level of prominence in the larger economic landscape than is the case in liberal capitalist (favoring the private sphere) or socialist countries (favoring the public sphere).[2] In the three decades following World War II – or *trente glorieuses* (Streeck, 2017, p. 96) – mixed economies were common.

In Europe, most countries had a Keynesian style economic system with generous social welfare programs and large public sectors that employed large segments of the population. For example, Germany implemented a *soziale Marktwirtschaft* (social market economy) (Magone, 2019, p. 93). Also, in the 1970s, "Through the *Istituto per la Riconstruzione Industrielle* the Italian government [owned] numerous financial and industrial enterprises, including Alfa Romeo, Alitalia, steel works, oil, telephone and telegraph, radio, television, and banks" (Mattick, 1978, p. 26). Even the more liberal-leaning countries such as Britain established robust public sectors such as the National Health Service (NHS). Meanwhile, many developing country governments provided electricity, telecommunications, transport, and financial services (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 447).

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nomic sphere. Property rights (recognized in Article 17 of the UDHR) demarcate the public from the private economic spheres and determine the extent to which the political realm can justly infringe on the private economic sphere. Except for Article 17, the UDHR's "first generation" classic liberal rights (Articles 3–21) primarily concern civil rights and liberties in the political realm, rather than goods and services production of the economic realm. Meanwhile, the UDHR's "second generation" socialist rights (Articles 22–26) recognize rights to a basic set of goods and services and thus potentially concern both the public and private economic spheres.

[2] According to Wetzel (2022, p. 159) under socialism, there is no private ownership of the (non-human) means of production. By contrast, rather than viewing the economic system as a whole as either socialist or capitalist, I describe each particular sector as either public or private in a broader context of a mixed economy.

All Societies Have Mixed Economies, Even Today

According to Wolfgang Streeck (2017, p. 56), "In the 1980s, the idea that 'modern capitalism' could be run as a 'mixed economy', both technocratically managed and democratically controlled, was abandoned." However, despite the rise of neoliberal capitalism in the 1980s, contemporary national economic systems continue to include a blend of public and private sectors (White & Williams, 2012; Araujo, 2018). For instance, Przeworski (1991, p. 125) observed that "In fact, all capitalist economies are 'mixed'," and in 1970, Paul Goodman wrote, "all actual societies are, and have to be, mixtures of socialism, market economy, etc." (Stoer, 1994, p. 201). Even communist countries such as China have developed a mixed economy, transitioning from about 70% public ownership in 1978 to about 30% as of 2018 (Piketty, 2020, pp. 606–7). Other communist countries such as Cuba have also allowed some private enterprise.[3]

In *The Mixed Economy of Welfare*, Martin Powell (2019a) emphasizes the following four sectors of the mixed economy: state, market, voluntary, and informal.[4] Macmillan and Rees (2019, p. 93) define voluntary welfare as "the activities of those primarily non-governmental and non-market organizations and groups which aim to address social welfare issues." They note that "in practice, the state and the voluntary sector, and latterly the market, are deeply intertwined rather than separate" (pp. 94–95). For example, the Netherlands and Switzerland allow for-profit entities to sell basic health insurance coverage, but they can only make a profit selling supplementary coverage (e.g., dental, private hospital rooms, extra preventive services, and more generous coverage of home health care) (Brown, 2015, p. 47).

Powell (2019c, p. 205) also emphasizes that "It is important to examine changes in the complex three-dimensional space of *provision*, *finance*, and *regulation* rather than focusing on simple and misleading changes in one dimension such as provision" (italics added). This framework from the comparative welfare literature – the four sectors (state, market, voluntary, and informal) and three dimensions (provision, finance, and regulation) – will help to structure the following discussion. To distinguish public from private economic spheres, I will also distinguish between ownership, governance, and beneficiaries.

[3] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2021, August 7). *Cuba allows small and medium-sized private businesses*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-58132000

[4] In the previous chapter, the terms formal and informal were used to distinguish state from non-state institutions, respectively. By contrast, in the comparative welfare systems literature, the informal sector refers to welfare services provided by family, friends, or neighbors, while the formal sector includes the state, as well as market, and non-profit sectors (Powell, 2019b, p. 113).

Private Economic Sphere

Private Economic Sphere Characteristics: Ownership, Governance, and Beneficiaries

In the private sphere, *ownership* usually involves shareholders (in the case of corporations) or sole-proprietors (in the case of small enterprises). Worker-owned (as opposed to publicly owned) enterprises might also be viewed as quasi-private in that the workers within any particular enterprise are a relatively small subset of the wider population. According to Chartier (2020, p. 75), "There are different types of markets, including those in consumer goods, worker owned firms (sole proprietorships, cooperatives, and partnerships), as well as corporations."

With regard to *governance*, one can distinguish between shareholder and stakeholder models of corporate governance.[5] The stakeholder model includes a higher degree of input from various actors with a stake in the company's business, such as company workers (e.g., codetermination), and possibly representatives from the financial sector or other civil society groups. In the USA, the stakeholder model of corporate governance was more common in the first three decades following World War II (Reich, 2015, p. 18). In some countries, intra-firm democracy has already become a norm. For example, in Germany, codetermination or *Mitbestimmung* is commonly practiced within enterprises (Piketty, 2020, p. 495).[6] Although such companies remain in the private sector, they can be viewed as less undemocratic than a corporation utilizing a more liberal style of shareholder governance common in the USA and Britain. The primary *beneficiaries* of the private sector are the buyers and sellers of a particular good or service.

Advantages of Markets: Provision, Finance, and Regulation

With regard to the *provision* of goods and services in the private sector, price is the primary mechanism regulating supply and demand. The price mechanism has the advantage of being a diffuse, efficient, and self-regulating means of allocating goods and services. Under a free market system, the forces of supply and demand tend toward an equilibrium "clearing price," where the quantities supplied and demanded of a good or service equal each other (Watson, 2018, p. 31). With regard to *finance*, the availability of investment capital from private banks also provides

[5] According to Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler (2014, p. 66), "The formal division of power in a corporation is between the board of directors, elected by the shareholders, and the company executives, hired and fired by the board. The board sets policy; management operates the company."

[6] Robert Reich (2015, p. 201) describes co-determination in Germany as follows: "corporate laws require 'co-determination,' with a management board overseeing day-to-day operations and a supervisory board for more high-level decisions. Depending on the size of the company, up to half of the members of the supervisory board represent employees rather than share-holders. Workers on the shop floor are also represented by works councils, or *Betriebsrate.*"

incentives for private actors to establish credit, the principal form of inter-personal trust in the private economic sphere.[7] Meanwhile, *regulation* in a free market stems from the mechanism of profit and loss.[8]

Libertarianism in the Private Economic Sphere

Freed Markets

Among market anarchists (a more radical school of economic liberalism), the most prominent idea for the private economic sphere is "freed markets" – that is, markets which exist in the absence of state power and the state-secured privilege (i.e., "cronyism") which will tend to accompany it (Chartier, 2020, p. 43).[9] Some advocates of freed markets known as mutualists favor worker-owned cooperatives as the primary form of private enterprise.

Other Organizations from the Private Economic Sphere

In the nonprofit welfare sector, there are both "voluntary" and "earned" nonprofit types (Macmillan & Rees, 2019, p. 96). "Earned" nonprofits might be described as private in that they offer their services for a fee and use those fee revenues to sustain the operation.

(By contrast, we might describe "voluntary" nonprofits as public in that they rely on donations and use these to offer free provisions to those in need.) Other organizations from the private economic sphere are found in the informal sector, specifically, goods and services provided at the family or friend-level, rather than at the neighborhood level (as the latter would be closer to public in its scale of provision).

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[7] Some aspects of market societies are trust-based, such as trust that a loan will be paid back (i.e., credit), and trust in the value of money (i.e., currency strength). Caplan and Weinersmith (2019, p. 103) also suggest that, at the societal level, a moderate level of trust might be more conducive to economic prosperity than either an extreme lack of trust or being highly trusting.

[8] Alluding to the primacy of the profit motive driving private investment, David Ricardo (1962 [1821], p. 283) writes, "It is not the price at which corn can be produced that has any influence on the quantity produced, but the price at which it can be sold. It is in proportion to the degree of the difference of its price above or below the cost of production that capital is attracted to or repelled from the land."

[9] Resembling this market anarchist view, Albertus and Menaldo (2018) argue that private enterprise itself is not problematic but rather the distortion of markets by political elites on behalf of insider economic elites. However, in contrast to market anarchism, they also argue that egalitarian (as opposed to elite-biased) democracies are less likely to engage in this type of market distorting behavior, implying that cronyism won't necessarily be a major problem under a state.

Public Economic Sphere

Public Economic Sphere Characteristics: Ownership, Governance, and Beneficiaries

With regard to *ownership*, public sectors are owned collectively by workers and/or the public within that polity. Worker-owned enterprises are less "public" than those sectors owned by the *demos* (i.e., populace) at, say, the municipal level. With regard to *governance*, public sectors are governed by the workers employed in those sectors, sometimes under managerial supervision, and with varying degrees of public input provided via direct or representative democracy. Of course, the managerial processes within a public sector organization can be organized more-or-less hierarchically.[10] According to Robert Dahl, worker self-governance "symbolizes the public nature of economic enterprises, in contrast to ownership by employees, whether individually or cooperatively, which still retains a strong flavor of private ownership." After all, "workers are but a sub-set of society as a whole" (quoted in Hanna, 2018, p. 138). Finally, the *beneficiaries* of the public economic sphere are the public at large (Sekera, 2016, p. 31), although recipients of a good or service can be more-or-less specifically targeted.

Advantages of State Sector: Provision, Finance, and Regulation

The public economic sphere includes (but is not limited to) state enterprises. It might also include municipal enterprises (Condit, 2019), for instance, although that too is owned by a *demos* (albeit at a more local level). Using the state to provide public goods and services has some advantages over non-state public or private enterprises. In terms of *provision*, the state can provide goods and services at little or no cost and thus ensure equal access.[11] With regard to *finance*, deficit spending can potentially be used to sustain the public sector and to provide jobs to public sector workers. On the topic of *regulation*, at the domestic level, public agencies are often regulated by (governmental or nongovernmental) waste-watchers, quality police, "sleaze-busters," and more (Powell, 2019a, p. 12).[12]

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[10] The notion of a public economic sphere as used here is distinct from Jurgen Habermas' deliberative vision of a public sphere, in which "High-quality public opinion forms [and] where private citizens can discuss and scrutinize government actions in an open and critical manner" (paraphrased by Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000, p. 308). The deliberative process described by Habermas could, however, be a guiding principle for the management of organizations within the public economic sphere.

[11] For example, during the COVID-19 crisis in 2020–21, the City of Cortland, New York cancelled bus fare for riders. Way 2 Go Cortland. (2021, June 29). *Fare collection to resume*. https://www.way2gocortland.org/post/fare-collection-to-resume

[12] Other regulatory mechanisms in the public sphere can also be identified. For instance, in public colleges and universities, student course evaluations (and the consideration of such evaluations by

Libertarianism in the Public Economic Sphere

Not Necessarily State-Based

According to liberal economic theorists – both radical (e.g., market anarchism and libertarian) and mainstream (neoclassical or neoliberal) – the public economic sphere is associated with the state (or a sub-national government) by definition and is thus incompatible with libertarianism. According to Miller (2019, p. 68), "Economists have traditionally viewed the public sector in association with the state and the private sector with the functioning of markets." For example, in his book *Private Governance*, Peter Stringham (2015, p. 5) boils it down to a simple binary choice: "People can rely on government, or they can devise private solutions." Similarly, market anarchist Stefan Molyneux asserts that "there is no public property in a stateless society."[13] Neoliberal economists also tend to reduce the choice of economic systems down to privatization versus centrally planned (state-based).

Even some advocates of the public economic sphere associate it almost exclusively with the state. For instance, according to Sekera (2016, p. 23), "The question for all of the new governance theorists is exactly this: How to restore the role of the state as a strategic agent that creates and implements collectively binding solutions on behalf of all citizens." However, treating the public sphere as synonymous with the nation-state (or a sub-national government) reinforces the right-wing framing that only markets are conducive to individual liberty. Instead, supporters of the public sphere should aim to demonstrate that it is compatible with individual liberty.

To distinguish the public from the private economic spheres, I emphasize the *goal (and/or potential) of providing equal access* to a good or service to a public at large, at little or no cost to the consumer (i.e., decommodification). Such a goal can be achieved by public sector organizations (both statist and non-state) but generally not by private sector organizations. To be sure, this is not a perfect distinction. For instance, focusing on Britain, Powell (2019c, p. 216) notes that "Not all public services are free at point of use [e.g., public housing and NHS prescriptions], and it is possible that privately owned but publicly funded services can be free at the point of use." However, rare exceptions aside, only the public sector has the potential to sustainably offer a good or service to the public at large free of charge.

I am not the first author to define the public sphere as including both state and non-state forms. In *Reclaiming Public Ownership*, Andrew Cumbers, "prefers to use the term 'public ownership' in its broadest sense as encapsulating all those attempts, *both outside and through the state* […] to reclaim economic space from capitalist social relations" (paraphrased by Hanna, 2018, p. 7; emphasis added). In

tenure-approving committees) may also have a regulatory affect by providing course instructors with a strong incentive to perform well.

[13] Philosophy Workout 2. (2018, March 15). *Practical Anarchy: The Freedom of the Future* [Video; 05:16:45]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlwOtHab44U

this chapter, I will distinguish between two applications of libertarianism in the public sphere: post-state and non-state.[14]

Post-State Public Sectors

Post-state public sectors are gradualist in nature, in that they attempt to apply libertarian practices to the state sector (without privatizing it). Post-state libertarianism can be advanced in two ways, depending on whether the good or service is geographically divisible. If the good or service requires a unitary solution, libertarian principles – an increase in volunteerism followed by a reduction in taxes – can be applied to the state organization at that level (i.e., fiscal decentralization (see Chap. 2)). If the good or service *is* geographically divisible, public control over that sector can potentially be decentralized as well (i.e., political decentralization).[15] The transformation (whether revolutionary or evolutionary) from state-based to post-state public sectors can thus be viewed as an extension of (or overlapping with) the gradualist vision as applied to the political realm (see Chap. 2).

Non-State Public Sectors

Unlike post-state sectors (more gradualist in nature), *non-state* sectors are prefigurative, as they are *already* sustained by volunteers. One type of non-state public sector organization is found in the voluntary sector. Prefigurative organizations such as syndicalist unions and mutual aid collectives fall into this category. Shane Burley underscores the voluntary nature of mutual aid in the following statement: "Mutual aid is the idea that when we support each other's needs in a reciprocal relationship, but without obligation or exchange, we have the best chance to survive and flourish."[16] In *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (ch. 7) Kropotkin describes examples of communalism and mutual aid in Europe (such as common land ownership in

[14] Condit (2019, p. 81) also uses these terms, writing, "The municipality is an instrument of the statist system, but it is also a possible resource for prefiguring non- or post-statist alternatives."

[15] For example, the American Public Power Association, a pro-municipalization group, notes that public electricity utilities are "usually a division of local government." American Public Power Association. (n.d.). *Municipalization*. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from https://www.publicpower.org/municipalization. Sam Gindin highlights the possibility of municipalizing ownership of hospitals, schools, utilities, energy distribution, transportation, housing, and communications, along with the creation of local community planning councils to manage them. Gindin, S. (2019, March 6). *We Need to Say What Socialism Will Look Like*. Jacobin. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/03/sam-gindin-socialist-planning-models

[16] Burley, S. (2020, March 27). *Amid the coronavirus crisis, mutual aid networks erupt across the country*. Waging Nonviolence. https://wagingnonviolence.org/2020/03/coronavirus-mutual-aid-networks-erupt-across-country/

Switzerland) which thrived despite the state's tendency to undermine such practices.[17]

There are many other examples of mutual aid, such as the "friendly fridge" network which began in Brooklyn, New York as a single refrigerator after the Covid-19 outbreak, and then proliferated into more than 100 fridges in New York and New Jersey.[18] Also, Notara 26, Greece's first housing squat for refugees and migrants, "has housed over eight thousand refugees and migrants from over fifteen countries – for free. Self-managed, this squat goes above and beyond in delivering mutual aid to people in need" (Georgiades, 2020, p. 115). A type of mutual aid was also practiced by indigenous communities in southern Zambia (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019, p. 97). Yet another example can be found in El Cambalache, in Chiapas, Mexico, "a moneyless exchange-based economy" which involves "the daily activities of sharing, exchange and mutual aid" (Araujo, 2018).

Drawing upon socialist ideas, non-state public sector organizations can potentially be governed horizontally by workers councils, workers collectives, and/or anarcho-syndicalist unions. Shannon, Nocella, and Asimakopoulos (2012, p. 18) note that "Anarchists […] have typically called for some form of *decentralized* planning" in non-state organizations and networks. Also, relevant, participatory economics (Parecon) is characterized by decentralized planning, as well as balanced job complexes, the organization of society into councils, and the syndicalization of industry (Spannos, 2012, p. 60). Economic planning can be carried out by state-based agencies (at some level of government) as well as non-state organizations.[19] Other types of non-state public sectors include "voluntary" nonprofit organizations (whose operations are sustained via donations rather than user fees), as well as informal organizations at the neighborhood scale (approximating the goal of providing goods or services to a community at large).

[17] Kropotkin, P. (1902). *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/petr-kropotkin-mutual-aid-a-factor-of-evolution

[18] Edwards, J. (2021, April 27). *Inside the Brooklyn Fridge that Started a Mutual Aid movement*. BK Reader. https://www.bkreader.com/2021/04/27/inside-the-brooklyn-fridge-that-started-a-mutual-aid-movement/

[19] Sam Gindin calls for "layers of planning" including workplace collectives, sectoral councils, regional councils, markets ("as an indirect form of planning"), and a central planning board, as well as "political mechanisms to establish national goals." Gindin also identifies various "mechanisms of planning: direct administrative, consultative, iterative negotiations, decisions through delegated bodies, direct cooperation, markets with widely different degrees of freedom." Gindin, S. (2019, March 6). *We Need to Say What Socialism Will Look Like*. Jacobin. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/03/sam-gindin-socialist-planning-models

3.3 Libertarian Mixed Economy

Economic Liberal Arguments

Classic Liberal Perspectives on Private Ownership

Classical liberal perspectives emphasized the importance of private property and the labor theory of value. For instance, in his *Second Treatise of Government*, John Locke (2003 [1689], p. 275) argued that by applying one's labor to natural resources, that person thereby makes the product his own, separating it from the commons.[20] A century later, in *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith (1994 [1776], p. 33) would also emphasize the importance of labor, identifying it as "the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities." Smith, like Locke, also emphasized the benefits of privatizing the commons (ibid, p. 609). Several decades later, Thomas Malthus (1964 [1836], p. 76), in *Principles of Political Economy*, wrote, "if land were not appropriated, its produce would be very much less abundant compared with the demand, and that consequently the producers and consumers would be much worse off." One implication of this classic liberal conception of property rights (based on one's own labor) is that land used for hunting and gathering by indigenous peoples was considered vacant by colonial settlers (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 149).

Liberal Individualistic View of Human Nature

Liberal arguments for private property rest in large part on an individualistic view of human nature. According to economic liberalism, allowing people to pursue their individual goals was the best way to promote the public welfare. The idea that people acting on their private interests would aggregate into a wider public benefit can be traced back at least to Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees: Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (1992 [1714]). This idea would become foundational to classic liberal economic theory as well. Emphasizing the importance of self-interest, Adam Smith (1994 [1776], p. 15) memorably observed that "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages."

According to Steven Pinker (2002, p. 161), "[Adam Smith] assumes that people will selfishly give their labor according to their needs and will be paid according to their abilities (because the payers are selfish, too)." Another classical economist, Thomas Malthus (1964 [1836], p. 434) wrote that "we shall best conform to that

[20] Michael Reagan (2021, p. 73) mentions that the labor theory of value was eventually adopted by opponents of capitalism as well who argued that, according to the theory, the workers rather than the employers should own what they produce.

great principle of political economy laid down by Adam Smith, which teaches us a general maxim, liable to very few exceptions, that the wealth of nations is best secured by allowing every person, as long as he adheres to the rules of justice, to pursue his own interest in his own way."

In the extreme, economic liberal perspectives depict people as *homo economicus* who always prioritize rational self-interest over broader social considerations. *Homo economicus* is "driven exclusively by 'economic' motives, i.e., solely by the intention of making the greatest possible material or monetary profit" (Mises, 1963, p. 62). According to Bookchin (2005, p. 207), "What makes capitalism so unique is the sweeping power it gives to economics: the supremacy it imparts to *homo economicus*." From the economic liberal perspective, even if individuals are not viewed as the *homo economicus* extreme, the communist idea of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" is not sustainable, because economic activities must be incentivized by profit and loss or some other tangible personal benefit such as a wage.

The Liberal Critique of Socialism: Trampling on Property Rights

Liberal economic theory identifies two basic challenges with socialism: a tendency to use state power for private gain and an inability of public planners to efficiently allocate resources. The first critique flows from the individualistic understanding of human nature, anticipating that representatives, bureaucrats, interest groups, and even the voting public will tend to use state power to maximize their own utility without due regard for property rights or other ethical standards. Referring to insider economic elites, Chartier (2020, p. 96) argues that, in contrast to consensual (i.e., voluntary) market exchanges, the state "offers regulators power that is likely to be abused for the benefit of the well-connected."[21]

From the neoclassical public choice perspective (a subset of economic liberalism), democratic politics are essentially a political market composed of self-interested actors where votes are exchanged for particularistic public policies (Buchanan & Tullock, 1990 [1962]). Consequently, the majority will tend to use democratic processes to transfer wealth downward without due concern for property rights. For example, in *The Calculus of Consent*, Buchanan and Tullock (1990 [1962], p. 201) write, "majority voting will tend to cause overinvestment in the public sector relative to the private sector." In a similar vein, libertarian Ayn Rand described democracy as a "social system in which one's work, one's property, one's mind, and one's life are at the mercy of any gang that may muster the vote of a majority" (quoted in Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 178).

Concern about democracy was also expressed by political scientist Samuel Huntington who warned in 1975 of an "excess of democracy" in which citizens

[21] Such an observation is, of course, not limited to economic liberals. For instance, comparative politics researchers Albertus and Menaldo (2018) refer to "insider economic elites" who benefit from cozy relationships with political elites.

were "progressively demanding and receiving more benefits from their government" (quoted in Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000, p. 301). More generally, Domhoff (2006, p. 193) refers to "The fear business leaders express of the democratic majority." For neoliberal economists, "The market was not simply the most efficient means of allocating goods and services but also the best social decision-maker, one that might escape from the contentious political realm" (MacLean, 2017, p. 41).

The Liberal Critique of Socialism: Inability to Calculate

Liberal economic theorists also argued that socialist economic planners would be unable to efficiently allocate resources, in what is sometimes called the "The socialist calculation debate" (Przeworski, 1991, p. 114).[22] One such critique is found in Friedrich Hayek's (2011 [1960], p. 705) book, *The Constitution of Liberty*: "Profit tells the entrepreneur that the consumers approve of his ventures; loss, that they disapprove. The problem of socialist economic calculation is precisely this: that in the absence of market prices for the factors of production, a computation of profit and loss is not feasible." Another neoclassical author, Ludwig von Mises (1963, p. 700), in *Human Action*, observed that "The paradox of 'planning' is that it cannot plan, because of the absence of economic calculation."[23]

Referring to the case of Brazil, Fukuyama (1992, pp. 104–5) notes that public sector companies "use employment as a form of political patronage" and prices are set "by a process of political negotiations with powerful unions." More recently, in his book *Private Governance*, Peter Stringham (2015, pp. 223–4) writes, "[Under a] system based on legislation, even democratically based […a] legislator could guess whether his constituents wanted more shirts or fewer than provided the last time he or his predecessor was elected, but he would have little idea about how his guesses are related to the real ranking of what each citizen prefers."

From the economic liberal perspective, even where democratic political processes are used, the information provided – via voting, the lobbying of representatives, town halls, or other forms of input – will be few and far between, compared to the diffuse price signals sent with every micro-level transaction in a system of markets (Chartier, 2020, pp. 78–79). Market anarchists, similar to other economic liberals, tend to eschew public planning as contrary to individual liberty and/or as unlikely to function properly in the absence of market mechanisms.[24] These challenges are addressed later in this chapter in a discussion about collective action problems.

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[22] For an insightful discussion of this topic, see: Gindin, S. (2019, March 6). *We Need to Say What Socialism Will Look Like*. Jacobin. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/03/sam-gindin-socialist-planning-models

[23] Contrary to this assertion, some plausible ideas for socialist planning have been developed (e.g., see Wetzel, 2022, pp. 357–66).

[24] Some advocates of freed markets refer to their ideas as a type of market socialism (i.e., based on worker-owned cooperatives). However, in this chapter, I will use the term "socialism" in reference to a model, which can be applied to the public (rather than private) economic sphere.

Socialist Arguments

People Are Social by Nature

Just as economic liberalism has been underpinned by a more individualistic understanding of human nature, those on the left-wing of the political spectrum have tended to view people as more social in nature. For example, early proponent of anarchist communism Peter Kropotkin (2015 [1892], p. 210), in his book *The Conquest of Bread*, described the post-revolution libertarian communist society as, "able to conceive solidarity – that immense power which increases man's energy and creative forces a hundredfold – the new society will march to the conquest of the future with all the vigour of youth." In his book *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902), Kropotkin provides numerous examples of mutual aid practiced throughout mankind's existence.[25]

There is some evidence of mankind's communal nature in the historical record. For example, some point to anthropological evidence of sustainable, communal living among early homosapiens.[26] Commenting on the implication of such evidence, Shannon, Nocella, and Asimakopolous (2012, p. 23) observe that "the vast majority of human social relations were spent in hunter-gatherer societies without any concept of private property, in collectivities that based their lives on personal possessions and forms of common, social resources […] Did we collectively just act against our natural wiring for the vast majority of our existence?"

Also, more contemporary hunter-gatherer communities are found to be more strongly egalitarian.[27] In the industrialized world, more evidence of mankind's potential for collectivism can be found in the first decades following World War II, when a pro-welfare state consensus emerged underpinned by a view of social welfare as reflecting an organic society working in concert for its collective benefit (Lund, 2019, p. 43).

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[25] Kropotkin, P. (1902). *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/petr-kropotkin-mutual-aid-a-factor-of-evolution

[26] For instance, archeologists recently discovered evidence of non-hierarchical communal living in Kenya. Burke, J. (2018, August 20). *Kenya burial site shows community spirit of herders 5000 years ago*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/aug/20/kenya-burial-site-shows-community-spirit-of-herders-5000-years-ago. Another recent study found that indigenous peoples sustainably managed much of Earth's land for thousands of years prior to colonialism. Rosane, O. (2021, April 21). *Humans Sustainably Managed Much of Earth's Lands for Thousands of Years, Study Affirms*. EcoWatch. https://www.ecowatch.com/indigenous-land-conservation-earth-history-2652676314.html

[27] Taylor, S. (2020, August 20). *Humans aren't inherently selfish – we're actually hardwired to worktogether*. TheConversation. https://theconversation.com/humans-arent-inherently-selfish-were-actually-hardwired-to-work-together-144145

The Socialist Critique of Liberalism: Intra-Firm Hierarchy

Given the divergent views of human nature (between economic liberals and socialists), it is perhaps not surprising that anarchist economic ideas appear to be polarized between advocates of collectivism, socialism, and communism on the left,[28] and advocates of freed markets on the right.[29] On the one hand, Shannon, Nocella, and Asimakopoulos (2012, p. 19) observe that "Most anarchists […] reject market-oriented visions, with some even suggesting that markets themselves are part and parcel of capitalist society." Consistent with this observation, Shannon (2012, p. 280) asserts that "We are opposed to wage labor – the ability for people to own productive property and expropriate the surplus value created by others who use it. There are no 'anarcho'-capitalists." According to Michael Albert (2012, p. 335), cofounder of the participatory economics (Parecon) model, markets, as well as central planning, "will subvert our other libertarian values and aspirations."

Socialist and communist theory identify two basic challenges for liberalism: hierarchical relations within firms between workers and employers, and a tendency toward monopoly capitalism. With regard to the first challenge, unlike public sector organizations, private sector businesses are not meeting places for collective public decision-making. At most, such businesses can facilitate decision-making among those directly involved with the enterprise: owners, workers, and/or managers. As Shannon (2012, p. 284) notes, "markets are not participatory."

Furthermore, private enterprises tend to be internally hierarchical, with the business owners at the top of the hierarchy, workers on the bottom, and, in larger businesses, managers in between.[30] In *Capital, Volume I*, Karl Marx (1961a [1887], p. 332) observed that "An industrial army of workmen, under the command of a capitalist, requires, like a real army, officers (managers), and sergeants (foremen, overlookers), who, while the work is being done, command in the name of the

[28] Some democratic socialists such as Thomas Piketty and Sam Gindin seem to accept something like a mixed economy. For instance, Gindin writes that "Markets will be necessary under socialism." However, Gindin also rejects the idea of commodified labor markets on the grounds that it "robs workers of that human capacity" to create based on their own plans. Gindin, S. (2019, March 6). *We Need to Say What Socialism Will Look Like*. Jacobin. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/03/sam-gindin-socialist-planning-models. Meanwhile, Ben Burgis also promotes a sort of mixed economy consisting of nationalized "commanding heights" (big finance, health care, and education) while the remaining private sector is converted to cooperative worker-controlled firms. Burgis, B. (2020, May 21). *Capitalism Isn't Working. But What Would a Viable Socialist System Look Like?* Jacobin. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/05/capitalism-socialism-cooperatives-market-nhs-democracy

[29] Market anarchists – part of the individualist camp of anarchism – sometimes describe their position as being located on the libertarian *left* of the ideological space (e.g., the Center for a Stateless Society). However, I use the more conventional (and arguably conceptually valid) description of the left-right dimension with advocates of collectivism and communism located on the left and advocates of markets on the right. By that convention, left-right position is determined by one's view regarding the extent to which a society's goods and services should be commodified.

[30] Mutualism occupies a sort of middle ground in that it advocates worker-owned and managed cooperatives functioning in a market environment.

capitalist." And, in *Capital, Volume III*, Marx (1962 [1894], p. 378) writes: "the wage-labourer, like the slave, must have a master who puts him to work and rules over him." More recently, Derek Witorff notes that, even in a more perfectly competitive environment, "hierarchy exists within that specific context of the business and property."[31]

The Socialist Critique of Liberalism: Monopoly Capitalism

Marxists often deny the distinction between political and economic realms on the grounds that the state is essentially an instrument of class rule. That is, governments (part of the "superstructure") are not free to act independent of capital (the "base").[32] Even after World War II, in countries with a mixed economy "private capital remained dominant" (Mattick, 1978, p. 107).[33] Marxist economists anticipate that capitalism will tend to bring about the accumulation of wealth and a corresponding increase in socioeconomic inequality (Mattick, 1978, ch. 4; Piketty, 2014). In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx (2000 [1844], p. 85) asserted that "the necessary consequence of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands, and thus a more terrible restoration of monopoly." The post-modern rise of artificial intelligence is likely to increase inequality even more (Inglehart, 2018, p. 195).[34] With this increase in economic power would, presumably, come increasing political power.

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[31] Wittorff, D. (2017, June 4). *Democracy: Self-Government or Systemic Powerlessness?* Center 4 Stateless Society. https://c4ss.org/content/49249

[32] Echoing this point from a more moderate perspective, Robert Reich (2015) emphasizes that before the fields of economics and politics were separated in the twentieth century, the field of political economy was premised on the assumption that economic and political power were closely interrelated.

[33] According to Piketty (2020, ch. 11), the twentieth century social democracies failed to fully achieve and sustain egalitarian societies due to an insufficiently ambitious and systematic use of social ownership (power sharing within firms) and temporary ownership (wealth redistribution), as well as a failure to update social democratic ideas for the age of neoliberal globalization. Similarly, I would argue that the post-war mixed economies were ultimately not sustained because the other major prerequisites for libertarian social democracy (political institutions conducive to anarchism, the abolition of class, and an anarchistic culture) were still more-or-less lacking.

[34] According to Reich (2015, p. 40): "Unlike the old monopolists, who controlled production, the new monopolists control networks [e.g., Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon]. Antitrust laws often busted up the old monopolists. But the new monopolists have enough influence to keep antitrust at bay." Another contemporary monopoly/oligopoly in the USA is the "big four" commercial airlines: Delta, American, United, and Southwest. Stewart, E. (2021, July 15). *America's monopoly problem stretches far beyond big tech*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2021/7/15/22578388/biden-hearing-aids-executive-order-lina-khan. Also, the production of most US baby formula by three large companies – Abbott, Gerber, and Reckitt – was cited as a reason for the formula shortage in 2022. Leonhardt, D. (2022, May 13). *The Baby Formula Crisis*. New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/13/briefing/baby-formula-shortage-us-economy.html

From a left perspective, capitalist economies will tend toward privatization, monopoly, and socioeconomic inequality. In the process, alternative spheres of work "are believed to be washed over and increasingly eroded away by a relentless sea of capitalism" (White & Williams, 2012, p. 199). For example, Acemoglu and Robinson (2019, p. 307) refer to the "public-private partnership" style found in the USA, which creates "difficulty in providing broad-based public services." In the Spring of 2020, this difficulty became apparent during the coronavirus pandemic, when there was a shortage of virus testing and other supplies such as hospital beds and respirators (Laursen, 2021, p. 29). According to Noam Chomsky, these shortages reflected an overreliance on private health care corporations.[35] The US Post Office has also been subject to neoliberal privatizing reforms in recent years (Sekera, 2016, p. 56).

As a result, privatization coincides with increasing socioeconomic class stratification, and inter-class dependencies. For example, in 2005 James Buchanan wrote that people who fail to save for their own retirement "are to be treated as subordinate members of the species, akin to […] animals who are dependent" (quoted in MacLean, 2017, p. 212). Less severely, during a libertarian experiment in Grafton, New Hampshire ("The Free Town Project") in the mid-2000s, there was a lack of services to help deal with black bears searching for food around peoples' homes, and a lack of snowplow services for some residents.[36] Moreover, privatization won't necessarily save the government money if a "care gap" (i.e., those without coverage) remains. For example, after some pensions were privatized in Chile, the government had to support those who lacked their own plans (Krugman, 2020, p. 23).

The Libertarian Mixed Economy Argument

Human Nature Is Normally Distributed

There is a tendency to oversimplify human nature into either inherently selfish and violent, or kind and cooperative (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 21). In contrast to the aforementioned polarized views, human nature is here understood as normally distributed (in the shape of a bell curve) across a single dimension from the most social to the most selfish individual. From that perspective, the average individual has an even balance of selfish and social tendencies, with fewer and fewer

[35] Democracy Now. (2020, July 30). *Noam Chomsky: Decades of "the Neoliberal Plague" Left U.S. Unprepared for COVID-19 Outbreak*. https://www.democracynow.org/2020/7/30/noam_chomsky_coronavirus_trump_response

[36] Illing, S. (2020, December 10). *How a New Hampshire libertarian utopia was foiled by bears*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/21534416/free-state-project-new-hampshire-libertarians-matthew-hongoltz-hetling

individuals located along the spectrum as one moves toward the social and individualistic extremes.[37]

Reflecting a similar view of human nature, political scientists Frieden, Lake, and Schultz (2019, p. 517) observe that "As social animals, humans possess a degree of empathy that is weaker in some, stronger in others, but present in all." Also relevant, in *Beyond Self-Interest*, editor Jane Mansbridge (1990, p. 8) refers to "the dual motivations of self-interest and public spirit" (see also Ansell & Torfing, 2021, p. 14). In the same volume, Christopher Jencks (1990, p. 53) makes the following plausible statement: "Every motive or act falls somewhere on a spectrum between extreme selfishness and extreme unselfishness, depending on the relative weight we give our own interests and the interests of others." In addition to being intuitively plausible, the "normally distributed" view of human nature is consistent with research from the cognitive sciences showing that "the mind is not a homogenous orb invested with unitary powers or across-the-board traits" (Pinker, 2002, p. 40).

Human Nature Corresponds with Mixed Economies

If it is true that human nature is normally distributed along a spectrum from individualistic to social, it follows that a society's institutions should be designed so as (i) to allow for these diverse tendencies to be freely expressed in a manner compatible with the goal of equal liberty and (ii) to more fully harness and channel human motivations and energy into collectively beneficial economic activity. Economic systems, which tilt too far in the direction of either privatization or socialization, will tend to stifle the natural human tendency corresponding to the neglected economic sphere. Jane Mansbridge (1990, p. xii) makes a similar point in the following passage:

> Larger democratic polities must also balance techniques and institutions that assume self-interest and those that assume public spirit. At the moment, techniques and institutions geared to self-interest probably have far more weight in liberal democracies, and especially in the United States, than is compatible with the long-run public good. Prescriptively, therefore, it makes sense to try to redress this imbalance by revitalizing or creating institutions that foster a commitment to the common good.

Kropotkin argued in *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902) that despite the modern liberal state's tendency to suppress mankind's mutual aid instinct, that instinct continues to find widespread expression even in the modern context (Kropotkin was, of course, writing during the first period of liberal globalization prior to World

[37] A similar "middle-ground" view of human nature might be found in peoples' tendency to seek reciprocity with others (Pinker, 2002, p. 303). Reciprocity is neither purely selfish (as it implies mutual gain), nor is it as altruistic as, say, anonymously giving to the poor (the second highest of Maimonides Eight Levels of Charity). Bookchin (2005, p. 117) also views reciprocity as somewhat more self-interested than *usufruct* practiced in many pre-state societies.

War I).[38] The potential for the state to allow, or even encourage mutual aid and other prefigurative efforts, is further discussed in Chap. 8.

Addressing Economic Liberal Concerns About Socialism

Cronyism and Majority Tyranny

As has been mentioned, in this chapter, I advance an argument for a libertarian mixed economy. It will be argued that a properly balanced mixed economy is compatible with and essential to equal liberty. Making such an argument persuasively requires addressing economic liberal concerns about socialism, and socialist concerns about economic liberalism. I begin with a discussion about liberal concerns. Concisely put, it is here argued that, just as a democratic political system with multi-party competition will not necessarily be biased in favor of capital (argued in the Introduction), nor will public officials necessarily become corrupt and infringe excessively on the property rights of private individuals. That is a legitimate concern about government but not an immutable characteristic.

An example of government acting in the public interest can be found in the "Asian Tiger" economies in the second half of the twentieth century. According to political scientist Henry Nau, "[while] governments were not immune to corruption, as scandals in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan repeatedly demonstrated […] the process was motivated by a sense of national pride and duty, not the rent-seeking and resource-stripping policies that afflicted many elitist Latin American governments" (Nau, 2019, p. 423). While this is just one example, it suggests that a strong cultural sense of civic responsibility can help to counter the temptations of public officials to abuse government power.

Administrative Inefficiency

The other liberal critique of socialism is that public planners, without the profit and loss signals normally available to buyers and sellers in a market system, will be unable to allocate goods and services efficiently and will, instead, be guided primarily by "the political market" – that is, political competition for control over and use of state power on behalf of narrow interests. This, in turn, will lead to the proliferation of bureaucratic red tape and inefficiency. My rebuttal is twofold. First, it is here argued (admittedly, somewhat as an article of faith) that a social revolution can succeed in creating conditions conducive to the use of democratic political systems for the public benefit.

[38] Kropotkin, P. (1902). *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/petr-kropotkin-mutual-aid-a-factor-of-evolution

Second, even under the current conditions, while regulatory capture and bureaucratic inefficiencies do often proliferate, public agencies do not necessarily exhibit such a tendency.[39] For example, the United Nations (UN) was once viewed as a wasteful bureaucracy in the 1970s and 1980s, as many of its employees were there for patronage jobs from their home state, rather than their qualifications. There was insufficient oversight of UN agency budgets and high-profile cases of bribery and corruption. However, under Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, reforms were implemented in the 1990s, which reduced the size of the bureaucracy, eliminated waste and redundancy, and changed the Secretariate to a meritocracy (Dille, 2019, p. 182).

Addressing Socialist Concerns About Markets

The Public Option as a Solution

The solution emphasized by libertarian social democracy (this book's argument) in response to socialist concerns about markets can be boiled down to a single idea: the public option. That is, by providing employment opportunities to the public at large, a robust public economic sphere can strengthen the bargaining hand of private sector workers, and deprive capitalists of an unemployed labor force, thus putting the brakes on capital accumulation.[40] In contrast to the left-wing perspective that a mixed economy cannot long exist without a "dictatorship of capital," it is here argued (to some extent, again, as an article of faith) that a nonclass society can be maintained with a mixed economy after a successful social revolution. If a robust public economic sphere (or a "commons") is sustained, that should also provide the workforce with an alternative to private sector employment, and thus also, place a check on intra-firm hierarchy and monopoly capitalism.[41]

[39] Chartier (2020, pp. 99–100) describes *regulatory capture* as occurring where "Regulators who are expected to ride hard on a given industry are often people drawn from that industry." In many cases of regulatory capture, "members [of the regulatory bodies] are appointed by politicians who are funded by the corporations" (Wetzel, 2022, p. 109).

[40] A universal basic income could also reduce peoples' reliance on private sector work (Reich, 2015, p. 215). However, without a properly balanced mixed economy, I expect most workers would still be channeled toward the private sector for employment opportunities, raising the risk of excessive wealth accumulation.

[41] Consistent with this argument, some studies have found a negative relationship between public sector employment and inequality. For instance, in his study of the UK from 1986 to 1995, Grimshaw (2000) concludes that "the relatively centralised pay arrangements in the public sector [helped slow] the increase in wage inequality." Other studies have found a positive relationship between privatization and inequality across European countries (Peña-Miguel & Cuadrado-Ballesteros, 2021), and in Western China (Bakkeli, 2017).

Intra-Firm Hierarchy

Private enterprises can be more-or-less democratically managed, although the tendency seems to be toward intra-firm hierarchy (Wetzel, 2022, p. 29). Even in the case of private firms managed in a rigidly hierarchical way, the coercive imposition of democratic principles into the private sphere (from codetermination, to full worker ownership, to public expropriation), while contributing to the level of equal liberty in a society by making those firms more democratic, must also be weighed against the loss in equal liberty attributable to any infringements on property rights. At what point does the equal liberty gained by imposing democracy on an enterprise, outweigh the equal liberty gained by leaving such enterprises free to manage their business hierarchically? I return to that question below.

Outside Options Enhance Employee Bargaining Strength

There are two collective benefits anticipated from increasing (ideally, high quality) job opportunities in the public sphere. First, such alternatives should enhance employee bargaining strength in their interactions with private sector employers by providing the former with outside options, thus improving wages and working conditions in private sector employment. For example, in the early nineteenth-century USA, "The cheapness of women on the labor market came from their lack of social opportunities elsewhere" (Reagan, 2021, p. 47). Making a similar point, Gabriel Amadej observes that "Markets give people the right of economic exit from the absolutist domain of community, just as the community gives people the right of exit from the cash nexus."[42]

Employee bargaining strength might also be enhanced by high labor union density and norms of respect for collective bargaining rights in the post-revolution environment.[43] However, enhancing worker *exit* via public sector job opportunities will reduce the need for a labor union *voice* in the private sphere.[44] In this sense, the presence of a robust public economic sphere provides a natural (or noncoercive) check on private employers (via *exit*), in contrast to the more coercive class struggle

[42] Amadej, G. (2017, June 13). *The Regime of Liberty*. Center 4 Stateless Society. https://c4ss.org/content/49334

[43] In *Capital, Volume I*, Marx (1961a [1887], p. 299) underscored the disadvantages facing non-unionized laborers: "The history of the regulation of the working-day in certain branches of production, and the struggle still going on in others in regard to this regulation, prove conclusively that the isolated labourer, the labourer as 'free' vendor of his labour-power, when capitalist production has once attained a certain stage, succumbs without any power of resistance."

[44] Consistent with the idea that full employment empowers workers (even without strong unions), Reich (2015, p. 124) recalls that, during the Clinton administration, "the rate of unemployment became so low that hourly workers gained enough bargaining power to get higher wages." More recently, a labor shortage developed in May of 2021 in the USA, and large employers began to offer higher wages. Leonhardt, D. (2021, May 20). *The myth of labor shortages*. New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/20/briefing/labor-shortages-covid-wages.html

check imposed via collective bargaining (*voice*).[45] However, even after a successful social revolution, in an egalitarian society, labor unions might be needed to ensure a fair bargain between employers and employees, or simply to provide an organizational basis to facilitate democratic decision-making within and across enterprises.[46]

Outside Options Deprive Capitalists of Workers

The second collective benefit of providing quality public sector employment concerns the broader goal of maintaining an egalitarian, post-class society. By giving workers numerous employment opportunities in the public sphere, the mixed economy places a natural check not only on private sector work conditions but on capital accumulation more broadly.[47] Before the process of land enclosures gained momentum at the dawn of the modern era, the Commons may have also had such a leveling effect. As Paul Street explains, "The commons are the vast swaths of land, stream and forest in which pre-capitalist people found sustenance, insulating them from having to rent out their labor power to capitalists to garner the money required to purchase life's necessities as commodities."[48]

In *The Conquest of Bread*, Kropotkin (2015 [1892], p. 42) wrote that "If all the men and women in the countryside had their daily bread assured, and their daily needs already satisfied, who would work for our capitalist?" Making a similar point, Wayne Price (2012, p. 321) observes that "Even if the basic needs sector was market-like, there would be no reserve army of the unemployed, since everyone would have at least the guaranteed minimum to live on." And, according to Wetzel (2022, p. 28), "Being forced to take jobs with employers and submit to their management regime is a systemic form of unfreedom for workers in capitalism. We're forced to do this because we don't have our own means of production that would enable us to generate our own livelihood." These are plausible assertions substantiating the point I wish to make here.[49]

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[45] In this sense, I agree with Chartier (2020, p. 116) that "Participatory management and the protection of workers' interests are quite possible without union." However, where they are formed, "Good-faith negotiation with a union can be an appropriate means of respecting and empowering workers" (p. 117).

[46] Even in egalitarian democracies such as Sweden, "The crown jewel of income leveling was an informal institution pioneered in the late 1930s: centralized wage bargaining" (Albertus & Menaldo, 2018, p. 117).

[47] In the current context, small businesses are too numerous, diverse in size, and lacking in financial assets to challenge corporate political dominance (Domhoff, 2006, p. 42). In a post-revolution setting, we might similarly expect small and medium sized enterprises to be unable to challenge the public sphere, ensuring the robustness of the latter.

[48] Street, P. (2017, April 29). *The Many-Sided, Overlapping Meanings of May Day*. Truthdig. http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/the_many-sided_overlapping_meanings_of_may_day_20170429

[49] Consistent with the idea that public sector job opportunities deprive capitalists of workers, in a cross-national study, Behar and Mok (2019) find that higher levels of public sector employment are

Capital Accumulation Relies on Labor

As was noted previously, Marxists anticipate that capitalism will tend to bring about the accumulation of wealth and a corresponding increase in socioeconomic (and political) inequality. From Marx's perspective, capitalist wealth accumulation relies crucially on the availability of labor. For example, in *Capital, Volume III*, Marx (1962 [1894], p. 224) writes, "The mass of profit cannot increase so long as the same amount of labour is employed, unless the unpaid surplus-labour increases, or, should intensity of exploitation remain the same, unless the number of labourers grows." According to Wolff and Resnick (2012, p. 197), summarizing the Marxian view: "capital accumulation encounters no problem so long as additional labor power is available to hire."

If capital accumulation does rely on the availability of labor (as seems plausible), a robust public economic sphere that provides workers with alternatives to private sector employment should help to prevent it. Marx (1961a [1887], p. 767) appears to have recognized a similar point in *Capital, Volume I*: "So long, therefore, as the labourer can accumulate for himself – and this he can do so long as he remains possessor of his means of production – capitalist accumulation and the capitalistic mode of production are impossible." I have thus far established that a mixed economy is essential to equal liberty by addressing liberal concerns about socialism and socialist concerns about liberalism. I turn next to the question of how to strike the proper balance between public and private spheres in a mixed economy.

3.4 Balancing Public and Private Economic Spheres

How to Balance Public and Private?

In thinking about a mixed economy, a basic question concerns how, exactly, to strike the appropriate balance between public and private economic spheres. This is, of course, not a new question. For instance, in *The Calculus of Consent*, a foundational text in the neoclassical public choice school, Buchanan and Tullock (1990 [1962], p. 5) observed that "The important choice that the group must make, willy-nilly, is: How shall the dividing line between collective action and private action be drawn?"

Buchanan and Tullock assert that "an independent criterion for determining the appropriate allocation of resources between the public sector and the private sector does not exist" (p. 203). From the neoclassical perspective, the answer can only be found through positivist theory explaining how rational choice will lead to certain institutional designs under certain conditions. Thus, Buchanan and Tullock focus on cases where the establishment of constitutional rules is rational given some

negatively correlated with private sector employment. (A potential downside to this pattern, they argue, is a net increase in unemployment rates if private sector jobs are "crowded out").

individual-level marginal cost/benefit analysis. (My argument, by contrast, focuses on *collective* costs and benefits, especially net gains or losses in equal liberty, a diffuse benefit.)

It is not enough to focus primarily on positivist analysis to identify the conditions under which certain constitutional rules are likely to be established. There is a need for a normative standard to determine what *should* fall into the public and private economic spheres, even if the line distinguishing these two spheres is often blurry (Strauss, 1957). In what follows, I will suggest that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) be viewed as a baseline standard for striking the optimal mixed economy balance. This seems appropriate as the UDHR was approved unanimously in the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948, in the "window of opportunity" after World War II (Glendon, 2001, p. xix).[50] In particular, I will emphasize a balance between the negative right to property (Article 17), and the positive right to essential goods and services (Articles 22–26).[51]

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a Baseline Standard

Property Rights (Article 17)

What Is Meant by Property Rights?

The liberty pillar of the UDHR (Articles 3–21) – sometimes described as a legacy of classical liberalism – recognizes "first-generation" rights, including the right to private property. Article 17 of the UDHR reads: "(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property." It should be mentioned that, in the following discussion, I will focus primarily on the right to private property as derived from Roman Law (as opposed to communal property more common among pre-colonial indigenous communities), as the former has become the basis for most legal systems today

[50] The UDHR adoption in 1948 was arguably an example of John Rawls' (1971) idea of objectively just institutions being created from behind a veil of ignorance. That event might also be viewed as an example of a Rousseauian *General Will* (guided by the general interest) (Rousseau, 1987 [1762], Bk. II, Ch. 3). After all, the framers of the UDHR "believed they had found a core of principles so basic that no nation would wish openly to disavow them" (Glendon, 2001, p. xviii). On the other hand, the UDHR adoption could also be viewed as a *Will of All* (the sum of private interests), as the great powers launched the human rights project as a concession to small countries and in response to humanitarian civil society groups (ibid, p. xv).

[51] Some anarchists argue against the use of human rights as a standard for socially just institutions. For example, Bob Black refers to "the hoopla about universal and objectively existing human rights" warning that "Anarchists are at risk of being drawn into reformism by taking up this particular cause." Black, B. (2015). *Notes on "Post-Left Anarchism."* The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/bob-black-notes-on-post-left-anarchism

(Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 161). The Roman Law conception of property is unique (historically speaking) in that the responsibility to share and collectively care for property "is reduced to a minimum, or even eliminated entirely" (ibid).

While the right to private property is a multifaceted concept (Hanna, 2018, p. 141), one can reduce it to three broad categories. First, there is the right to *possession or ownership* of property, as recognized in the UDHR. This would include the security of one's property as well as the right to destroy or not take care of it (*abusus* in Roman Law) (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 161). Second, there is the right to *exclusive control* including the right to management or usage (*usus* in Roman Law). Also, falling under this category is intellectual property, that is, control over one's new designs, ideas, and inventions (Reich, 2015). Third, there is the right to *free exchange*, including the right to acquire income and capital from one's possessions, and to enjoy the products of one's property (*fructus* in Roman Law).

Why Accept Private Property Rights?

Private property rights are essential to a free and equal society, for two main reasons. First, property rights are arguably essential for equal liberty, as is confirmed by its recognition in the UDHR.[52] In his book *Capital and Ideology*, Piketty (2020, p. 990) argues against private property as a natural right:

> The idea that strictly private property exists and that certain people have an inviolable natural right to it cannot withstand analysis. The accumulation of wealth is always the fruit of a social process, which depends, among other things, on public infrastructures (such as legal, fiscal, and educational systems), the social division of labor, and the knowledge accumulated by humanity over centuries.

Thus, from Piketty's perspective, societies can justly impose public ownership (nationalization), social ownership (codetermination), or temporary ownership (progressive taxation and redistribution) on owners of private property to achieve a just egalitarian society. While Piketty makes a key point that wealth is not accumulated in a vacuum, this seems like insufficient grounds to discard the right to private property outright. Instead, it will be argued below that the right to private property must be weighed against the right to a set of public goods (and a mixed economy, by implication) recognized in the "second pillar" of the UDHR (especially Articles 22–26).

The second reason to support property rights is that they are understood as essential for the economic welfare of a country (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 429). As Amartya Sen (1999, p. 61) notes, "private property has proved to be, in terms of results, quite a powerful engine of economic expansion and general prosperity." Liberal economic theory arguably deserves some credit here. That is, the classical liberal

[52] The question of property rights "occasioned much debate" among the UDHR's framers. For instance, it was opposed by the UK's Labour Government on the grounds that property was so extensively regulated that it made no sense to speak of a right to ownership (Glendon, 2001, p. 182).

emphasis on private enterprise and comparative advantage provided a scientific basis for understanding patterns of international trade. Notably, David Ricardo (1962 [1821]) has demonstrated the advantages of free trade over protectionism, as the latter will tend to increase prices for consumers and reduce the efficiency of economic production.[53]

Positive Rights (Articles 22–26)

What Is Meant by Positive Rights?

While *negative rights* (such as the right to private property) set limits on government interference,[54] *positive rights* call upon the government (or other public sector actors) to proactively guarantee certain resources. The equality pillar of the UDHR (Articles 22–26) – sometimes described as a legacy of the socialist movement – recognizes "second-generation" rights to social security, employment, food, clothing, housing, medical care, social insurance, child care, and education. Roughly corresponding with that list, Piketty (2020, p. 1003) asserts that "a just society must be based on universal access to fundamental goods, foremost among which are health, education, employment, the wage relation, and deferred wages for the elderly and unemployed."[55]

Also overlapping with the UDHR list of positive rights, Amartya Sen (2009, pp. 379–80) describes welfare rights as "entitlements to pensions, unemployment benefits and other such specific public provisions aimed at curtailing certain identified economic and social deprivations […possibly including] illiteracy and preventable ill-health." To the list of guaranteed services, one might also add other sectors commonly found in the public sphere such as mail services, public media networks, basic utilities such as water, and fire protection.[56] Similarly, Ronald Inglehart (2018,

[53] By contrast, in *The Holy Family*, Marx and Engels observed (from a *dialectical*-scientific, rather than a rational choice perspective) that, in his 1840 book *What is Property?*, "Proudhon subjects private property […] to a critical examination […and thus presents] for the first time, the possibility of making political economy a true science" (quoted in Price, 2013, p. 8).

[54] According to the negative liberty view, "markets are free when buyer and seller, or parties to a contract, make an informed decision that isn't coerced" (Wetzel, 2022, p. 27).

[55] Overlapping with the UDHR's "equality pillar," University of California, Riverside professor Matthew Snyder calls for universal access to "The Golden Square": food, shelter, healthcare, and education. The Future is a Mixtape. (2020, August 27). *031: The No-Bullshit Blueprint for Socialism*. https://www.thefutureisamixtape.com/episodes/2020/8/27/031-the-no-bullshit-blueprint-for-socialism

[56] One could justifiably extend the rights minimum from the UDHR to the wider body of international human rights law built upon it. As Glendon (2001, p. xvi) explains, the UDHR "is the parent document, the primary inspiration, for most rights instruments in the world today." For example, the right to clean drinking water is not explicitly recognized in the equality pillar of the UDHR or the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). However, this right has been recognized in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Article 14) as well as the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 24).

p. 214) argues that government jobs are needed, "in health care, education (from pre-school to post-graduate levels), infrastructure, environmental protection, research and development, care of the elderly, and the arts and humanities." According to Sen (2009, p. 381), "The second-generation rights [of the UDHR] have become a significant influence on the agenda of institutional reforms for the fulfillment of 'imperfect' global obligations."

Such rights have also been recognized in some national constitutions. The Polish constitution, for example, "declares a whole range of socio-economic rights such as housing, child care, consumer protection and economic protection" (Gallagher et al., 2011, p. 88). Also, the preamble to the French constitution of 1946 (subsequently applied to the 1958 constitution by the Constitutional Council) includes the right to social security, and nationalization of industries with monopolistic or public service characteristics (Magone, 2019, pp. 251–2). And, although they are not found in the US constitution, many of the UDHR's economic rights were drawn directly from Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal (Frieden et al., 2019, pp. 504–5).

Why Accept "Second-Generation" Positive Rights?

There are a few reasons we should accept the idea of guaranteeing essential public goods and services. First, as was argued above, as part of the public sphere, positive right sectors provide public sector jobs and thus help address socialist concerns about intra-firm hierarchy and monopoly capitalism. As Wetzel (2022, p. 36) explains, "a social group is oppressed if its positive liberty is seriously trampled or denied in a systemic way." Second, an acceptance of second-generation rights should also coincide with an enhanced sense of community. In a similar vein, Inglehart (2018, pp. 209–10) argues that government jobs can "improve the society's quality of life and give people a sense of purpose and self-esteem."[57] Also relevant, a human right to health might help to "galvanize the moral resolve essential for finding creative solutions to what appear to be hopelessly technical rationing problems involving truly tragic tradeoffs" (Hassoun, 2020, p. 165).

Third, like property rights, ensuring the provision of certain essential public goods will "contribute to economic growth and prosperity" (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 429). As Amartya Sen (1999) argues, poverty should be seen as *capability deprivation*, rather than simply a reflection of low income. For example, the Nordic countries "have high levels of entrepreneurship – because people are more willing to take the risk of starting a business when they know that they won't lose their health care

[57] In contrast to Reich (2015, p. 215), Inglehart (2018, p. 207) argues that a universal basic income would be an inadequate solution for the USA today, as it doesn't provide a sense of purpose to the masses. For instance, referring to the high death rates of the unemployed from opioids, Inglehart notes that "They are dying, not from starvation but from leading pointless lives."

or plunge into abject poverty if they fail" (Krugman, 2020, p. 323). In the twentieth century, investments in health and education, pensions, unemployment insurance, and social transfers were critical to economic development in Europe and the USA (Piketty, 2020, p. 458).

Fourth, only the public sector can ensure equal access to a particular good or service in a relatively large community. If it is accepted that all individuals have a right to certain goods and services, it follows that they ought to be provided by the public sector which, unlike the private sector, can potentially provide such resources at little or no cost to the consumer. As Sekera (2016, p. 57) explains, "In the market, access to products and services is expressly contingent on ability to pay. In the public non-market, supply is free or with fees that are non-economically significant." In other words, goods and services provided via private enterprise will be guaranteed only to those who can afford them.

As an example of privatization limiting access, consider the following example from Bolivia: "In 1998, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund said the Bolivian government must privatize its water company to receive a loan. When Bolivia sold the rights to the Bechtel Corporation, many poor Bolivians saw their water bills increase by 300%–400%. Many were no longer able to afford safe, clean potable water" (Hassoun, 2020, p. 164).

Mail delivery provides another example. Commenting on the Post Office in 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, "There is an astonishing circulation of letters and newspapers among these savage woods… I do not think that in the most enlightened districts of France there is an intellectual movement either so rapid or on such a scale as in this wilderness" (quoted in Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019, p. 318). Even today, it seems unlikely that a for-profit mail delivery company could, without government subsidies, sustainably deliver mail to people in highly remote locations at little to no cost (aside, perhaps, from some exceptional cases where the company benefited from the deliveries in some other way).

Criteria for Balancing Private Property and Positive Rights

I have thus far argued that the UDHR provides a useful baseline for striking an equal liberty maximizing balance between property rights, on the one hand, and positive rights to essential goods and services, on the other. I have also sought to demonstrate that there are strong arguments in favor of both sets of rights. But beyond the UDHR, how can communities properly strike the balance between public and private spheres in a mixed economy? Below are suggested legal guideposts for adjudicating in particular property rights cases.

(A) *Baseline property rules*[58]

(1) *Effective possession* – justly acquired property is effectively possessed
(2) *Free exchange* – given (1), individual is free to exchange property or keep it
(3) *Exclusive control* – given (1), individual retains full control over property

(B) *Criteria for maintaining a mixed economy*

(1) *Positive rights* – privatization should not deprive people of essential goods or services as recognized in the UDHR (or subsequent laws or declarations developed from the UDHR)
(2) *Employment* – privatization should not excessively deprive people of public employment opportunities

(C) *Evaluating rights tradeoffs*

(1) *Clear case for property right* – If the justness of the property right is established in (A) and does not violate the criteria for maintaining a mixed economy in (B), then coercive democratization of the private entity will yield a net loss in equal liberty. Just law would favor the property right.
(2) *Clear case for democratization* – If the justness of the property right is not established in (A) and does violate the criteria for maintaining a mixed economy in (B), then democratization of the private entity will yield a net gain in equal liberty. Democratization can be justly imposed.
(3) *Essentially contested claims* – If the justness of the property right is established in (A), but also violates the criteria for maintaining a mixed economy in (B) (or vice versa), the majority should decide democratically or, if solutions are geographically divisible, the decision might be decentralized to a more local level. In the event of expropriation, some compensation may be justified.

Applying the Criteria for Balancing Public and Private

Example 1 Private health insurance
In the USA, the idea of forcing people to leave their private health insurance plans so that the government can become the "single payer" (a "Medicare For All" plan) is not as popular as the idea of a public health insurance option ("Medicare For All who want it"). Among the rights recognized in the UDHR is that to medical care

[58] These baseline property rules are adopted from Chartier (2020, p. 51). I do not analyze here in-depth the different arguments regarding what counts as a just initial property acquisition (and subsequent exclusion from that property). Spafford (2020, p. 337) suggests a potentially just guideline, according to which "each person should limit her holdings to just the resources assigned to her by the relevant egalitarian principle of distributive justice (e.g., the resources that will allow her to live as good of a life as everyone else)."

(Article 25) and thus, *a fortiori*, the right to health insurance (since many cannot afford to pay for care out of pocket[59]). However, this right must be weighed against the property rights at stake.

The first baseline property rule asks: Does an individual have *effective possession* (i.e., was the good or service justly acquired)? In the case of private health insurance, with few exceptions, individuals who purchase private health insurance should have effective possession of that plan. Thus, to coercively deprive individuals of their insurance plan would also violate their right to *exclusive control*, and perhaps also the right to *free exchange*, which permits actors to buy and sell services.

While a single-payer plan (which would abolish private health insurance) would violate property rights in that sense, it would also bring about a strong gain in the positive right to medical care. With the public insurance option ("Medicare for all who want it"), by contrast, universal coverage might not be achieved (e.g., some might prefer to pay a fine rather than abide by a mandate to purchase insurance). However, the choice between single-payer and public option remains essentially contested. In such cases, the decision should be determined by the majority in their respective polities.

Example 2 The privatization of indigenous lands

Under Mexico's state-sponsored conservation program *ProÁrbol*, the right to forest lumber was privatized in three communities within the Chiapas region where the Zapatistas live (Clark, 2019, p. 121). Thus, a relevant question arises over whether it would be justified for the Zapatistas (or the government of Mexico) to reclaim that forest land for their affected communities.

Does the timber company have *effective possession* of the resources? That is, were the resources justly acquired? While the UDHR itself does not explicitly recognize an indigenous right to forest resources, Article 26.1 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples reads: "Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired." On its own, this would seem to suggest that the privatization of the forest was not justified. However, Article 32.2 states that indigenous peoples can consent to privatization of their own resources. However, if they did not freely consent to the forest privatization (as the account provided by Clark (2019, p. 121) seems to suggest), it could be justified to reclaim those resources.

Example 3 Intellectual property

Intellectual property – new designs, ideas, and inventions – is becoming increasingly important to the economy (Reich, 2015). How might intellectual property

[59] Krugman and Wells mention an "80–20 rule": 80% of health care costs are borne by 20% of consumers in the USA. "Think coronary bypass operations, dialysis, and chemotherapy, not a visit to the family physician about a sore throat." Krugman P., & Wells, R. (2010, September 30). *The Slump Goes On: Why?* New York Review. https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2010/09/30/slump-goes-why/

cases apply to the adjudicating guidelines suggested above?[60] For instance, Amazon received a patent for the concept of "one-click checkout," and in 2014, Apple received a patent based on the idea of offering author autographs on e-books (Reich, 2015, p. 21).

First, with regard to *effective possession*, we can ask whether the intellectual property was justly acquired. The Patent and Trademark Office (or some other bureaucratic agency with a similar mandate) and/or courts adjudicating patent litigation cases would presumably be the primary entities responsible for making such a determination, using the latest precedent (and updating such precedents if necessary for justness).[61] Second, with regard to *positive rights*, we can ask: Does the intellectual property unjustly infringe on the commons? Intellectual property rights are not transferred from a previous owner to the inventor via a transaction. If anything, one might argue that patents allow the inventor to privatize an idea which was previously in the intellectual commons (even if only as a latent idea). For instance, Piketty (2020, p. 665) refers to the "private appropriation of common knowledge" by big tech firms such as Google. For intellectual (as opposed to physical) property, one way to approach this topic is by asking whether some idea can justly be patented, and if so, for how long? According to Reich (2015, p. 22), "An entire legal industry has developed around defending patents or suing for patent infringement," suggesting that, overall, patent durations ought to be shortened.

Democratic Decision-Making in the Economic Realm

Democracy in the Public Versus Private Economic Spheres

Democracy is essential to anarchism in the political realm because, in those matters concerning the community at large, democracy is the form of collective decision-making most conducive to individual autonomy.[62] For the same reason, if the goal is to maximize equal liberty, democracy is also required for major decisions concerning the public economic sphere. The general idea is that one cannot be autonomous unless they have some control over (and, ideally, achieve consensual agreement regarding) policies that unavoidably affect them: laws under a polity, or regulations

[60] While a review of intellectual property legal theory would be useful here, my comments will focus primarily on the general guideposts suggested above.

[61] Currently, intellectual property patents can be obtained only if the Patent and Trademark Office deems the idea "new and useful" (Reich, 2015). Pointing to a key normative tradeoff regarding patents and copyrights, Reich (2015, p. 20) asks, "What's the proper balance between giving would-be inventors enough ownership that they're motivated to invent and giving the public affordable access to their discoveries?"

[62] In a similar vein, Wetzel (2022, p. 35) argues that "self-management is about control over decisions 'to the extent you are affected by them'." Also relevant, Ansell and Torfing (2021, p. 243), in their argument for co-creation of public services, emphasize the importance of participation among those most directly affected.

and policies affecting the expansiveness of and management within the public economic sphere. Adopting Sekera's (2016) description of public sectors as "public non-markets" (rather than quasi-markets), representative and/or direct democracy should be used as a means for (i) maintaining a just balance between public and private (guided by the aforementioned criteria) and then (ii) participating in public sector governance in the case of issues directly affecting that community.

Private sector matters, by contrast, primarily concern those with an immediate interest in those goods or services (business owners, their employees, as well as consumers). Beyond such actors, private sector decisions are not inherently the concern of the *demos* and thus do not necessarily require democratic decision-making to maximize individual autonomy. Of course, private affairs can also bring about negative or positive externalities affecting the wider community. According to Buchanan and Tullock (1990 [1962], p. 75), where externalities from private enterprise are high, collective action is to be expected. But because this is a subjective assessment, "Property rights especially can never be defined once and for all, and there will always exist an area of quasi property rights subject to change by the action of the collective unit" (p. 73). This subjectivity further underscores the argument that democratic procedures are needed to maximize equal liberty when revising the composition of the mixed economy (Piketty, 2020, p. 968).[63]

Some Determinants of Collective Choice

Sekera (2016, p. 60) argues that "Neither economics nor economists can tell us what combination of outputs a society should choose, but in terms of public goods, a democratic society makes its choices by the representatives its citizens elect." One might also note the possibility of direct democracy as a means of economic policy decision-making. Whether representative or direct, the democratic choice concerning the economic balance between public and private in any society is likely to reflect (i) the distribution of human natures within that society, (ii) its institutional and cultural norms, and (iii) any bias favoring a narrow group or class interest (especially prior to a necessary social revolution).

Roughly corresponding with this list of factors, Rawls (1971, p. 248) observes that "the decision as to which system is best for a given people depends upon their circumstances, institutions, and historical traditions." For instance, Rawls writes, "If a sufficiently large number of [citizens] find the marginal benefits of public goods greater than that of goods available through the market, it is appropriate that ways should be found for government to provide them" (p. 249).

[63] That is, if there was an objectively correct, or "certainly just" balance between public and private (from behind a Rawlsian veil of ignorance), then a less democratic top-down imposition of that standard onto the community might itself be procedurally justified. However, since such matters are often essentially contested, democratic procedure is equal liberty maximizing.

Pluralism of Mixed Economies

Within or beyond the UDHR minimum, communities can decide on a variety of ways to strike the balance between public and private. As Goodwin et al. write, "In a society with free speech and democratic discussion, there is wide room for disagreement about what the best mix of goods might be" (quoted in Sekera, 2016, p. 60). The four sectors of the mixed economy – statist, market, voluntary, and informal – described earlier in this chapter also draw our attention to various modes of economic activity and systemic permutations. In a similar vein, Paul Goodman observed that

> The advantage of a mixed system […] is that it increases the opportunities for each one to find the milieu and style that suits him, whereas both the present American cash nexus and socialism necessarily process them and channel them (Stoer, 1994, p. 22).

One can even find openness to a mixed economy in libertarian communist thought. Specifically, Nestor Makno's Platformism called for the collectivization of land but also left room for working the land individually if desired (Kinna, 2019, p. 195). Mixed economy principles were also applied to some extent by anarchists during the Spanish Civil War, as Kinna (2019, p. 197) explains:

> Not everyone subscribed to the new egalitarianism, so in order to ease the tensions that collectivization caused, concessions were made. Small portions of irrigated land were set aside for each collectivist to grow crops for personal use and each was allowed to keep chickens and rabbits.

Calling for a new perspective beyond capitalism, White and Williams (2012, p. 124) refer to "a pluralistic economic lens that allows for the recognition of diversity and difference in commodified and non-commodified spheres of work." Adding more variety to the menu, Uri Gordon (2012) identifies various types of anarchist economic practices, such as anarchist unions, cooperatives and communes, local currencies, Food Not Bombs, Free shops, "do it yourself" (DIY) cultural production, and the electronic commons. The existing and potential diversity of economic activity is also reflected in The Democracy Collaborative's vision of a pluralist commonwealth (Hanna, 2018).

I have thus far demonstrated that a mixed economy is essential to a free and equal society and addressed liberal and socialist concerns about the public and private economic spheres, respectively. I have also argued that the UDHR provides a baseline standard for the mixed economy and suggested some legal guideposts for striking an equal liberty maximizing balance between rights to private property and basic goods and services. Next, I will discuss the application of libertarian principles to the public and private economic spheres before concluding this chapter.

3.5 Anarchism in the Economic Realm

Overcoming Collective Action Problems

Addressing the Challenges of Socialism

In its ideal libertarian form, the public economic sphere adheres to the communist principle: "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need." Rather than market mechanisms, the public sphere relies on modes of collective decision-making such as planning and democracy (Sekera, 2016, p. 32; Narveson, 2008, p. 105). This characteristic of socialism creates collective action problems on both the supply and demand side of the public sphere. If a mixed economy is essential to equal liberty, as I have argued, then solutions to the collective action challenges associated with public sector management should be addressed.

Supply Side Dilemmas: Public Goods and the Free Rider Problem

Public goods are sometimes defined as non-excludable and non-rival in consumption. Examples include national defense, electrical power and other utilities, and a clean atmosphere. Schlager et al. (2020) distinguish between complex public goods (social and economic programs) and simple public goods (hard infrastructure or specific amounts of money allocated to specific jurisdictions). According to Krugman (2020, p. 355), "The classic example [of a public good] is a lighthouse that steers everyone away from the shoals, whether or not they've paid the fee; public health measures that limit disease are in the same category."

In any case, the essential motivation to work voluntarily in the public economic sphere is not a personal income but rather the expressive benefits enjoyed by the workers as well as the diffuse benefits of living in a free and equal society (including guaranteed access to essential public goods and services). In the background, there is also the longer-term dialectical process propelling societies toward equal liberty, as argued in Chap. 1. However, without income as a selective (i.e., narrow) benefit for individual workers, public goods create potential free rider problems, where individuals wish to consume the good but are reluctant to help sustain it through volunteerism (Ansell & Torfing, 2021, p. 147).

One possible solution to free rider problems is privatization, although this is not necessarily equal liberty maximizing, as was explained above. A conventional solution, at the domestic level, is for the sovereign state to limit free riding by using tax revenues to pay wages to public sector workers.[64] The application of volunteerism

[64] Another form of worker remuneration is the voucher, which might not rely on revenues generated via state taxation. For instance, in the Parecon model, workers earn "effort rating credits" (similar to a voucher) rather than a monetary paycheck. Karl Marx (1961b [1893], p. 358) distinguishes money from vouchers in *Capital, Volume II* as follows: "In the case of socialized production the money-capital is eliminated. Society distributes labour-power and means of production to the dif-

to state sectors (i.e., fiscal decentralization) could be promoted by a successful social revolution in the economic realm (as egalitarianism would provide individuals with more time to volunteer) as well as in the cultural realm (as the normative and civic emphases on libertarianism would be enhanced). In a similar vein, Ansell and Torfing (2021, p. 14) note that incentives to volunteer can stem from altruistic reasons rooted in "socially constructed roles and identities." Collective action problems also appear to be mitigated by stronger social bonds (ibid, p. 18) and a sense of personal efficacy (ibid, p. 81).

Demand Side Dilemmas: Over-Consumption of Common Pool Resources

In contrast to public goods, *common pool resources* are described as non-excludable and *rival* in consumption. Examples of common pool resources include natural resources such as land or water (or the wildlife or fish found therein) and forest timber. The challenge with common pool resources is how to limit consumption and avoid a "tragedy of the commons" – where people overconsume scarce common pool resources.[65] As Chartier (2020, p. 99) explains, "When there's no way of limiting access to a resource, irresponsible people can degrade it or overuse it at will."

There are three ways to limit the overconsumption of scarce common pool resources: privatization or land parceling, non-state means of rationing, and state coercion. A classic example of privatization was the enclosure of the commons in England beginning in the early seventeenth century. The resulting increase in productivity was viewed by some as necessary to meet the growing demand for agricultural goods in the emerging urban centers, although it was also criticized as favoring the aristocracy.[66] In *The Conquest of Bread*, Kropotkin (2015 [1892], pp. 61–62) prescribes a more egalitarian form of land parceling: "no stint or limit to what the community possesses in abundance [e.g., some grazing lands], but equal sharing and dividing of those commodities which are scarce or apt to run short [such as timber-trees]."

Some examples of non-state rationing methods can be found in sub-national anarchist autonomous zones. For example, in the semi-autonomous zone of Christiania, near Copenhagen, "Each inhabitant pays a fixed amount of rent, as well

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ferent branches of production. The producers may, for all it matters, receive paper vouchers entitling them to withdraw from the social supplies of consumer goods a quantity corresponding to their labour-time. These vouchers are not money. They do not circulate."

[65] Sam Gindin states plausibly that "Scarcity – the need to make choices between alternative uses of labor time and resources – is unlikely to end outside of utopian fantasies because popular demands, even when transformed into collective/socialist demands, are remarkably elastic: they can continue to grow." Gindin, S. (2019, March 6). *We Need to Say What Socialism Will Look Like*. Jacobin. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/03/sam-gindin-socialist-planning-models

[66] Discussing the enclosure movement in England, Frieden, Lake, and Schultz (2019, p. 546) observe that "Once the commons was divided up among villagers and each person's share was fenced in – with the aristocracy getting a disproportionate share in most cases – landowners had incentives to manage their holdings more efficiently."

as thirty Danish crowns for every square meter they inhabit." The collective also "allows people to purchase a certain amount of electricity and water according to what they need, thus reducing over usage" (Nielsen, 2020, p. 139). During the Spanish Civil War in 1936, anarchists utilized an accounting system in the village of Naval to prevent wasteful consumption (Nappalos, 2012, p. 298). Also, during the Spanish Civil War, in the Mas de las Matas commune in Teruel, a rationing system was used for distribution, rather than money. Meanwhile, the canton of Alcorisa "introduced a point system instead of providing a standard ration" (Kinna, 2019, pp. 197–9).

International institutions also provide examples of rationing without the advantage of state coercion. For instance, after the International Whaling Commission approved a complete ban on whale hunting in 1982 (overturning the previously used numerical limit, which was much harder to monitor), the humpback whale population was restored (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 554).

A third solution to overconsumption is state regulations that limit the use of the commons. For example, the US Congress restricted logging in its Northwest with the Endangered Species Act 1990 to save the natural habitat of the northern spotted owl (Nau, 2019, pp. 464–5). As with progressive decentralization in the political realm (see Chap. 2), self-governance might limit the need for such regulations, setting the stage for reliance on informal means of enforcement. A successful social revolution could hasten such a transition, or even eliminate the need for some regulations right away. Particularly relevant here would be a revolutionary success in the cultural realm, given the stronger sense of community, civic responsibility, and collective appreciation for common pool resources a revolution could bring about.[67]

Deferred Reciprocity and Economic Institutions

With the gradualist anarchist approach (discussed below), the goal would be to transition from collectivism (where the state pays public sector workers) to communism (where workers volunteer). After that goal (the transition to communism) is achieved, there will still be a need for informal mechanisms to overcome the aforementioned collective action problems in the public sphere. Generally speaking, norms of deferred reciprocity, reinforced by informal institutions, can limit free riding and overconsumption by casting a "shadow of the future," stabilizing equilibria in which actors benefit from the longer-term diffuse benefits of an equal liberty maximizing society. Jencks (1990, p. 61) describes deferred reciprocity as, "an

[67] Exemplifying such an appreciation for the environment, Condit (2019, p. 126), recalling a moment from Savonlinna, Finland, writes, "Some years ago, the technical department, without prior notification, began to fell some trees in a woods near my house. By lucky chance, I was at home. I intervened in time to save some trees until the workmen checked with their superiors. They never returned and the woods still stand, home to birds, insects, small mammals and foxes, with the occasional lynx passing through in winter. They too are residents of the city, and anarchist praxis must represent them."

ongoing pattern of interaction in which I help you, then you help me, and so on. If each helpful act involves some risk to the actor but a greater benefit to the recipient, such interactions will eventually benefit both parties."

According to Buchanan and Tullock (1990 [1962], p. 103), "The *raison d'être* of market exchange is the expectation of mutual gains." However, in market exchanges, cost/benefit calculations are made precisely at the point of transaction. Meanwhile, deferred reciprocity could help sustain the public sphere, as people reciprocate each other's contributions by themselves volunteering in their own capacity. Like market transactions, deferred reciprocity also involves mutual gain but entails less precisely calculated payoffs given the diffuse benefits of maintaining the public sphere. Focusing on experiences in Africa, Hyden (2013, p. 86), explains that, with informal institutions based on reciprocity, "contractual agreements are not needed. There is no standard, like money, to gauge the value of specific exchanges. Terms are never precise, always ambiguous."

In the single-interaction prisoners' dilemma, defection is the dominant strategy of both actors.[68] However, with repeated interaction, actors can "get even" with each other for defecting (i.e., use deferred reciprocity), and this expectation promotes cooperation. In general, institutions promote deferred reciprocity by fostering repeated interaction and clarifying rules and expectations (sometimes called a "shadow of the future"). For example, Schlager et al. (2020), identify three types of institutions that sustain credible commitments in the management of New York City watersheds: power-sharing agreements (i.e., decision-making venues and rules), delegation of authority to a third-party (an administrator or organization), and mechanisms for monitoring and compliance (i.e., judicial or administrative review processes).

At the macro-level, state-based economic institutions might include the *allocation branch* (using taxes and subsidies to prevent the excessive concentration of market power), *stabilization branch* (to maintain high levels of employment), *transfer branch* (guaranteeing basic social welfare services), *distribution branch* (using taxes and property rights adjustments to correct the distribution of wealth), and the *exchange branch* (a special representative body which monitors preferences for public goods) (Rawls, 1971, pp. 244–9).

[68] Game theory analyzes strategic interactions between two or more rational (i.e., utility maximizing) actors. The prisoners' dilemma is a particular game theory scenario in which each actor (the two prisoners) has a choice between cooperating (not snitching on their co-defendant) or defecting (snitching). The ideal outcome (that yielding the shortest sentence) for both actors is to defect while the co-defendant cooperates. The worst outcome is to cooperate while the co-defendant defects. Because both actors prefer to defect regardless of what the other actor does, they end up with a sub-optimal outcome (receiving a longer sentence than they would have received had they been able to cooperate). The prisoners' dilemma is sometimes used as an analogy for a Hobbesian state of nature in which people tend to free ride by stealing from each other rather than making a productive contribution to the economy (Clark et al., 2013, pp. 100–8).

Gradualism Versus Prefigurative Anarchism in the Economic Realm

When thinking about the transition from compulsory taxation to libertarianism in the sustainment of the public sphere, an important question is whether to apply libertarian principles to state-based economic sectors (a gradualist approach promoting the development of post-state sectors), to expand voluntarism via non-state (voluntary and informal) sectors such as Remote Area Medical[69] or Pacifica Radio[70] (a prefigurative approach, as such groups are *already* sustained by volunteers), or some blend of the two.

Anarchists and libertarians have traditionally favored the prefigurative approach both in the political realm (via the establishment of autonomous zones) and in the economic realm (via market anarchist ideas such as *agorism* or cooperatives, voluntary services such as Food Not Bombs and mutual aid efforts, or syndicalist unions). The prefigurative approach has some benefits. For instance, mutual aid organizations prefigure non-state means of economic sustainment, and thus also help communities prepare for anarchy (and actually experience it, at least in a limited sense). A lack of money does not indicate poverty if mutual aid is sufficient to meet people's needs (Araujo, 2018). However, state-based services may also be needed in a libertarian mixed economy (for instance, to avoid a gap in health care coverage).

Advantages of State-Based Economic Sectors

Minimizing the Care Gap

Non-state modes of welfare provision do appear to "step in" where state welfare is insufficient. According to Martin Powell (2019b, p. 126), "The fact that fewer people provide [informal] daily care in countries with stronger formal long-term care systems suggests that there is a trade-off between formal and informal care." For

[69] Remote Area Medical (RAM) was a US-based non-profit organization established in 1992 to provide medical relief in Latin America. RAM, which relied totally on small individual donations and voluntary workers, had at one point provided health care to 920 patients in Knoxville, Tennessee, over a single weekend! In 2007, RAM treated approximately 17,000 patients overall. After 60 minutes ran a story on RAM operations in 2008, the organization saw a sharp increase in donations, generating $2.5 million in about 7 months. Pelley, S. (2008, February 28). *US Health Care gets boost from charity*. CBS News. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-health-care-gets-boost-from-charity/

[70] Pacifica Radio describes itself as public radio and, unlike the state sector which relies on compulsory tax-based financing, depends entirely on voluntary contributions from listeners during the various fund drives held by Pacifica Radio's local affiliates throughout the year. Despite the challenges of sustaining Pacifica's "fiercely independent" listener sponsored radio, the Pacifica Broadcasting network has remained on the air for decades and has maintained its journalistic independence.

example, mutual aid operations expanded in the USA during the coronavirus outbreak in Spring 2020 (Jun & Lance, 2020).[71] Mutual aid efforts can thus be expected to increase, to some extent, as the availability of state-based public services diminishes.[72]

But are non-state modes of welfare provision sufficient to replace state welfare *entirely*? That is, in the absence of the welfare state, would the level of volunteerism (in donations and labor), federal coordination, and administrative efficiency in the non-state public sectors be sufficient to meet total need? As was explained in Chap. 2, we cannot observe the decentralized counterfactual to assess how crime rates would change in the absence of state power. Similarly, in the economic realm, we cannot observe in advance how large of a "care gap" – that is, unmet need (Powell, 2019b, p. 128) – would remain between the total need for welfare services and the amount of services available from the non-state sectors.

Traditionally, anarchists have adhered to prefigurative approaches to transformative change, in both the political and economic realms. For instance, Laursen (2021, p. 192) describes social welfare programs such as Social Security and Medicare as "a form of mutual aid that doesn't need the State to function and therefore could help establish the basis for a stateless, cooperative economy." However, unlike markets, volunteerism, and the informal sector, the state can guarantee universal coverage.[73] In nineteenth-century Britain, well before the NHS was established, "mutual aid was criticized for its partial coverage, inability to provide insurance for older members, and the exclusion of the poorest" (Macmillan & Rees, 2019, p. 98). One of the advantages of mutual aid and community-level services is local autonomy (Ward, 2011). However, its main disadvantage seems to be greater potential for a care gap than with state-based institutions.[74]

Before and since the rise of the modern state, there have been many examples of organic mutual aid institutions, which sustained near-universal provision of essential services, as Kropotkin described in *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Ch. 7).[75]

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[71] Also see: Burley, S. (2020, March 27). *Amid the coronavirus crisis, mutual aid networks erupt across the country*. Waging Nonviolence. https://wagingnonviolence.org/2020/03/coronavirus-mutual-aid-networks-erupt-across-country/

[72] Making a similar observation in *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*, Hyden (2013, p. 88) observes that "as the state becomes stronger and more important in allocating resources in society, the relative importance of kinship networks diminishes."

[73] Justin B. Gifford, a Physician Assistant and former Army Combat Medic, provides a useful overview of how a libertarian communalist health care system might be organized, although the potential issue of insufficient health care volunteers is not addressed. Gifford, J. B. (2020, July 20). *Reclaiming public health: the communalist healthcare model*. Roar Magazine. https://roarmag.org/essays/social-ecology-communalist-healthcare/

[74] Of course, it is possible that state-based health care services will fail to achieve universal coverage just as mutual aid organizations may succeed in doing so. For example, Colin Ward (2011, p. 275) refers to the "Tredegar Medical Aid Society, founded in 1870 [Britain], which provided medical and hospital care for everyone in the district."

[75] Kropotkin, P. (1902). *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/petr-kropotkin-mutual-aid-a-factor-of-evolution

Indeed, the welfare programs of the social democratic state – pensions, unemployment insurance, child support, public housing, transportation, education, and health – were largely adopted from non-state organizations such as mutual aid societies and locally based services (Laursen, 2021, p. 209).

Conversely, one can easily find examples where systems of state welfare fall short of universal coverage. For example, Millett observes that "in 1979, before the [British] Conservative government and after thirty years of the Welfare State there were still 56,750 homeless families and 2,090,000 people below Supplementary Benefit level."[76] As another example, Laursen (2021, p. 32) writes, "When the State, including the powerful capitalist economy, fails to properly address a problem like COVID-19, much of its rationale for governing us is called into question."

The key challenge is to transition to a fully voluntary system of welfare while minimizing the care gap. While there is likely to be some care gap under both state-based and mutual aid-based systems, it is here argued that a transitional state welfare system is both possible and will tend to have a smaller care gap than a system that relies entirely on voluntary mutual aid, at least in the nearer term. Just as mutual aid norms were gradually supplanted by the rise of the modern sovereign state and reliance upon its services (as Kropotkin emphasized in *Mutual Aid*), so too might a contemporary transition from the state back to mutual aid require a gradual transformation to minimize the care gap.

With regard to the potential for state welfare systems to minimize the care gap, it is important not to overgeneralize from certain contemporary examples. In an unequal democracy, and/or in a more economically liberal setting (such as Britain), more low-income individuals will probably be without essential services than in a social democratic setting (such as in Scandinavia). Moreover, a care gap in some state settings does not preclude the possibility of state-based welfare policies being used for the public good, and sustaining universal coverage, *after* a successful social revolution.

The potential for a care gap can be seen in contemporary affairs. For instance, the British Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition (2010–15) advocated a neoliberal shift from "Big Government" to "Big Society," including the potential for "increased individual risk, increased inequality, 'DIY welfare' and a move back to the future of more pluralist welfare before the 'welfare state'" (Powell, 2019c, p. 214). However, such a conversion to non-state welfare may increase socioeconomic inequality (and perhaps with it a lack of access to essential services), as explained by Powell (2019c, p. 218) in the following statement:

> Thatcherite neoliberalism promoted idealized versions of 'communities', and seeks to restore a version of the lost world of mutualism, volunteerism and community solidarity. It also has parallels with the 'welfare society', where the informal sector resources expand to take the place of the retreating statutory ones, but which lead to further increases in social and economic inequalities through the increased commodification of public life, the shrinking of the state and the enhanced dominance of the market.

[76] Millett, S. (1997). *Neither State Nor Market: An Anarchist Perspective on Social Welfare*. The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/steve-millett-neither-state-nor-market

The gradualist approach advocated in this book would more closely approximate "cradle to grave" comprehensive welfare, while aiming to decentralize, volunteerize, and informalize the public sphere to the extent permitted by the level of sustained volunteerism available in the state-based and non-state sectors. This gradualist emphasis on avoiding a care gap while promoting volunteerism distinguishes libertarian social democracy (this book's argument) from the libertarian right and from the prefigurative anarchist left. Meanwhile, there are ways states can proactively promote volunteerism. For example, in Britain, "Alongside the promotion of bottom-up community development from the late 1960s, official recognition of the role of volunteers and voluntary effort in social services was provided by the report of the Aves Committee (1969), which recommended the establishment of a 'Volunteer Centre' to support the development of volunteering" (Macmillan & Rees, 2019, p. 99).

Federally Integrated Public Sectors

Minimizing Coordination Problems

In addition to minimizing the care gap, another potential advantage of a gradualist (state-based) economic sector, over its prefigurative alternative, concerns federal integration and administrative coordination. A well-functioning, federally integrated public economic sphere requires a certain amount of consensus and coordination over basic policies and procedures facilitating the supply of various public goods and services. Discussing libertarian socialism, Wetzel (2022, pp. 343–4) describes the need for federal integration as follows:

> Workers will need to bring the different facilities together into an industrial federation to do planning and coordination for an entire industry – such as healthcare, railways, or agriculture. Without a means to coordinated control and policy for an industry, worker groups controlling particular facilities might be pitted against each other in competition. Workers would be atomized and their social power diminished.

It is possible that such coordination could be achieved and sustained in the absence of state power. However, coordination problems might also necessitate more centralized forms of decision-making.

For example, Wetzel (2022, p. 336) describes an experiment in participatory budgeting undertaken by the Brazilian Workers Party while in control of the Porto Alegre city government. In that case, neighborhood assemblies were given control over part of the city's discretionary budget, allowing each to determine which services they wanted. While the assemblies did develop plans, the mayor's office would often overrule them. According to Wetzel, these mayoral overrides were "a limitation due to the fact the assemblies were embedded in the existing bureaucratic state." However, the mayor's overrides may also have been necessitated, to some extent, by a lack of coordination among the neighborhoods.

Prefigurative Coordination in the Spanish Revolution of 1936

The Spanish revolution of 1936 provides an example of relatively successful non-state federal integration (Wetzel, 2022, pp. 344–6). In that case, the libertarian socialists sought to achieve two basic goals. The first goal, an "expropriating general strike," was achieved. For example, telephone workers seized the assets of the Spanish National Telephone Company (the largest ITT subsidiary). As another example, a 40,000 member CNT health-worker union took over hospitals and drug factories and built Spain's first socialist health care system.

The second goal was to establish an overall social plan across the regional and national worker federations and congresses. Although that broader goal was never achieved, some progress was made within specific industries. For example, after railway worker militants seized the Madrid Zaragoza-Alicante railway (the largest privately owned railway in Spain), they moved to create a single Revolutionary Railway Federation to manage it, merging other railways into the federation such as the Barcelona commuter railways.

Ensuring the Provision of Public Goods and Services

Given the state's advantages when it comes to providing federally integrated public goods and services – building and sustaining infrastructure, administrative coordination, and paying public sector workers – it may be needed to ensure the provision of such goods and services at the local and federal levels. With regard to public sectors such as air traffic control that "are central by their nature" (Stoer, 1994, p. 151), it may make more sense to continue using existing public infrastructure after the revolution, rather than starting from scratch or relying on a prefigurative mosaic of relatively small, often disconnected non-state organizations.[77]

It might also be justified to expropriate privately owned monopolies. For example, internet cable service in the USA is a natural monopoly currently provided by private companies at the local level (Reich, 2015, p. 33). Where prefigurative efforts succeed in expropriating and sustaining public goods and services (as with the aforementioned examples from Spain), such efforts might be aided by the transitionary state or simply left alone. However, where prefigurative efforts fail to overcome coordination or free rider problems, it may be justified for the transitionary state to step in to ensure the provision of essential resources. I turn next to a third

[77] Kropotkin provided a description of such a prefigurative mosaic in a 1905 article written for *The Encyclopedia Britannica*. There, Kropotkin envisioned that, after a revolution, voluntary associations would "substitute themselves for the state in all its functions. They would represent an interwoven network, composed of an infinite variety of groups and federations of all sizes and degrees, local, regional, national, and international – temporary or more or less permanent – for all possible purposes: production, consumption and exchange, communications, sanitary arrangements, education, mutual protection, defense of the territory, and so on" (Kropotkin, 2002 [1909], p. 284).

advantage of the transitionary state: its capacity to impose a regulatory framework on the polity as part of its system of just law.

Regulatory Framework

In the context of libertarian social democracy, state-based regulatory institutions can be understood as part of the system of just law found in the political realm (but in this case applied to the public and private spheres of the economic realm). Regulation, like property rights, is a multifaceted concept. A distinction is sometimes made between, on the one hand, the regulation of businesses (especially private utilities) by auditors, inspectors, licensing bodies, competition and fair-trade authorities and, on the other hand, the regulation of public organizations by waste-watchers, quality police, and "sleaze-busters" (Powell, 2019a, p. 12).

In the current context, some regulations in the private sphere are arguably essential. For instance, Robert Reich (2015) argues that rules determining private property, constraints on monopoly, contract, bankruptcy or other means for coping with default, and enforcement of such rules are essential building blocks of any market. Furthermore, Streeck (2017, p. 207) explains that "markets need all sorts of rules against potentially rampant opportunism in extended chains of production and exchange, which is why regulatory law has grown and continues to grow alongside capitalism."

In the current neoliberal context, even essential regulations are often weakened after being enacted. For example, Domhoff (2006, p. 175) provides the following account: Under the 1990 Clean Air Act, "the steel industry has thirty years to bring twenty-six large coke ovens into compliance with the new standards. Once the bill passed, lobbyists went to work on the Environmental Protection Agency to win the most lax regulations possible for implementing the legislation. As of 1998, after twenty-eight years of argument and delay, the agency had been able to issue standards for less than ten of the many hazardous chemicals emitted into the air." Also, Domhoff (2006, p. 193) notes that the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) canceled a set of rules to prevent the return of tuberculosis in the workplace.

While the idea of regulation is politically divisive, we can highlight some anecdotal examples where regulations appear to have been more certainly justified. Thinking back to the first period of liberal capitalism, in *Capital, Volume I*, Marx (1961a [1887], p. 476) describes a mid-nineteenth-century regulation over match production by child laborers in England:

> In the manufacture of matches it was thought to be an indispensable requirement, that boys, even while bolting their dinner, should go on dipping the matches in melted phosphorus, the poisonous vapour from which rose into their faces. The Factory Act (1864) made the saving of time a necessity, and so forced into existence a dipping machine, the vapour from which could not come in contact with the workers.

Another example of an arguably just regulation, in this case in the construction sector, is noted by Friedrich Hayek (2011 [1960], p. 480) in *The Constitution of Liberty*:

> [I]n the case of building, the enforcement of certain standards is perhaps the only effective way of preventing fraud and deception on the part of the builder: the standards laid down in building codes serve as a means of interpreting building contracts and ensure that what are commonly understood to be appropriate materials and techniques will in fact be used unless the contract explicitly specifies otherwise.

As a more recent example, the 2008–09 financial crisis appeared to demonstrate that regulation in the financial sector is particularly important. Consistent with this view, Pettit (2014, p. 89) notes that "if regulation is ever desirable, it is desirable in the financial markets."

Regulation is politically divisive. As Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler (2014, p. 279) observe, "Most economists agree that overregulation adds greatly to the cost of living, that it is an obstacle to innovation and productivity, and that it hinders economic competition." Indeed, in some cases, deregulation can increase economic efficiency. For example, in 1978, "Congress stripped the Civil Aeronautics Board of its power to allocate airline routes to various companies and to set rates," which in turn set airlines free to choose where to fly and what to charge, increasing competition and bringing about an increase in flight affordability (ibid, p. 283).

Some contemporary regulations are arguably unjust and/or unnecessary, such as those which make it harder for low-skilled workers to migrate across borders (Caplan & Weinersmith, 2019, p. 48).[78] Regulations can also confer particularistic benefits on insider economic elites by limiting entry into an industry by smaller firms and thus reducing competition (Schubert et al., 2014, p. 281; Albertus & Menaldo, 2018; Chartier, 2020). There are several state policies that can have a market-distorting effect and undermine private-sector competition (Chartier, 2020, pp. 94–6). Among them are subsidies for businesses, bailing out businesses, tariffs on imports, patents and copyrights, licensing rules, and limits on immigration. Such policies may be utilized for private ends as a result of regulatory capture.

From the economic liberal perspective, the path to a post-class society is not more socialism or democracy (which will tend to be used for narrow interests), but rather to expand privatization and limit regulation. In turn, such liberal reforms should help level the economic playing field by minimizing (or ideally eliminating) state-secured privileges (i.e., "cronyism"). However, Wendy Brown (2019, p. 13) warns that "deregulated markets tend to reproduce rather than ameliorate historically produced social powers and stratification."[79]

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[78] For example, in July of 2021, the State of Texas began incarcerating immigrants by charging them with state crimes such as trespassing. Democracy Now. (2021, July 22). *Texas Starts Jailing Immigrants on State Charges After Crossing U.S. Border*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/7/22/headlines/texas_starts_jailing_immigrants_on_state_charges_after_crossing_us_border

[79] The economic liberal argument would seem to predict that firm entry (a measure of competition) should have increased as regulations declined overall during the neoliberal era. However, since 1978 firm entry rates have actually declined in the USA (Reich, 2015, p. 30). This could be interpreted as evidence that neoliberal deregulation has increased capital accumulation more than it has promoted market competition. On the other hand, outsourcing and technological change (them-

Also, according to Nancy MacLean (2017, p. 233), the neoclassical public choice perspective promotes, "'a terrible caricature' of how the political process works [and] constitutes an insidious attack on the very 'norm of public spiritedness' so crucial to shaping good government policy and ethical conduct in civic life." There are alternative perspectives – for example, the Rawlsian conception of laws created in the public interest from behind a veil of ignorance – which provide more scope for the possibility that just systems of regulation can be established and maintained in the public interest.

As with laws pertaining to, say, nonaggression or street crime in the political realm, consensus can (at least in theory) be built and sustained not only with regard to the proper balance of a mixed economy but also with respect to the system of economic regulations at different levels of government, thereby setting the stage for the informalization of such laws. Addressing the topic of affirmative action, Piketty (2020, p. 361) makes a similar point: "Ideally, a quota system should anticipate the conditions under which it would cease to be necessary. In other words, 'reservations' favoring disadvantaged groups should be phased out if and when they succeed in reducing prejudices."

Comparative public policy scholar Anneliese Dodds (2018, p. 285), explains that "in practice, it is most accurate to 'envisage the range of environmental policy instruments as being on a regulatory continuum, with idealized forms of 'pure' self-regulation and 'strict' command and control regulation at opposing ends'." From the perspective of libertarian social democracy, the longer-term goal should be to maximize self-regulation (as part of the broader goal of maximizing self-government).

Public Administration in a Democratic Transitionary State

Co-creation and Libertarian Social Democracy

Also relevant to the present discussion (concerning the application of libertarian principles to the public and private economic spheres) is the topic of public administration in a libertarian social democracy. The co-creation vision, as described by Ansell and Torfing (2021) in their book *Public Governance as Co-creation*, provides a useful starting point for thinking about public administration, as it has a few characteristics consistent with libertarian social democracy, but also some inconsistencies. I will begin with the consistencies.

First, like libertarian social democracy, co-creation is described as an alternative to "classic public administration" of Weberian bureaucracies based on hierarchical command and control. By contrast, co-creation "radically transforms the hierarchical relations between public and private actors into horizontal partnership relations

selves conferring certain benefits from a comparative advantage perspective) might explain some of this decline in firm entry.

based on interdependence and mutual respect" (p. 156). Such a vision, if realized on a wide scale, would seem to counter Wetzel's assertion that the public sector will tend toward a centralized bureaucratic class (I revisit this point below).

Second, also like libertarian social democracy, the co-creation vision is distinct from neoliberal New Public Management reforms "that run the public sector like a private business" (p. 2). Co-creation is not a free-market vision, as Ansell and Torfing explain: "Working together to solve common problems [i.e., co-creation] is not the same as individualizing problems with the danger that people with particular needs no longer receive proper help and support" (p. 241). Third, consistent with libertarian social democracy, co-creation is described as a consensual model of public administration: "A turn to co-creation in public governance will gradually change the public political culture, thus bringing it closer to a consensus democracy than to a majoritarian democracy" (p. 173).

These similarities suggest that co-creation could provide a useful starting point for thinking about public administration in a libertarian social democracy. However, there is an important distinction that should be noted: co-creation, as described by Ansell and Torfing, sees no place for a "withering away of the state," and can thus be described as a liberal-republican rather than a libertarian vision of public administration. As Ansell and Torfing explain, "we see co-creation as offering a democratizing supplement to existing forms of liberal representative democracy" (p. 247). From their perspective, although co-creation envisions an increasingly prominent role for private sector actors and volunteers in the creation and provision of public goods and services, the tax-funded welfare state itself is viewed as a permanent feature of society. By contrast, in the libertarian social democracy vision, public sector actors *themselves* eventually become volunteers.

Are State-Based Economic Sectors Inherently Hierarchical?

In his book *Overcoming Capitalism*, Wetzel (2022, p. 161) argues that "class oppression is inherent to the state structure, which is clear from the way public sector workers are subordinate to hierarchies of professionals and managers in the State." According to Wetzel, nationalization of industry and state-based planning will tend to create managerial hierarchies within that sector (p. 228).[80] From the perspective of libertarian social democracy, equal liberty maximization requires that public economic sectors (like political institutions) be organized democratically. Thus, if Wetzel was correct that such sectors are inherently hierarchical, it would be problematic for my argument.

In response, I will emphasize two counterarguments. First, in the near term (following a successful social revolution), even national-scale public sector administration can be organized democratically (while seeking consensus and cooperation),

[80] Similar to Wetzel's view, "Bakunin predicted that a completely state-run economy would develop a new ruling class from better-paid workers and socialist intellectuals" (Price, 2013, p. 107).

perhaps using the co-creation model described by Ansell and Torfing (2021) as a starting point. Second, over the longer term, there is the capacity for applying libertarian principles (after realizing a sufficient level of consensus and volunteerism) to existing state sectors of the economy (thereby achieving post-state public sectors). In the discussion below, I will focus especially on the importance of volunteerism as a prerequisite for achieving a post-state sector.

From Statist to Post-State Economic Sectors

Collectivism: Anarchism in the Transitionary Era

Worker remuneration has been a prominent debate topic in anarchist circles. In the late nineteenth century, there was an ideological disagreement between anarchist collectivists who believed in remuneration based on labor, and anarchist communists who favored distribution according to need (Graham, 2015, p. 226). According to Nappalos (2012, p. 307), "Collectivists have defined the value of labor under socialism in a variety of ways: amount produced, hours worked, difficulty of the work and effort in working (participatory economics), value of labor to society, and so on." In contrast to communism, collectivism still relies on worker remuneration as an incentive for public sector labor contributions. If the form of worker remuneration in the collectivist system is a monetary paycheck, it can be viewed as part of the transitionary period (as public sector wages must be provided by the state via compulsory taxation).[81] By contrast, communism will be viewed as a characteristic of the more ideal end of anarchy (which relies entirely on volunteerism).

Communism: Anarchy After the Transition

In contrast to collectivist wage systems, "communism argues for economic visions organized around the principle 'from each according to ability, to each according to need'" (Shannon et al., 2012, p. 30). Some communists have been quite critical of collectivism. For example, Peter Kropotkin (2015 [1892], p. 30), the founder of anarcho-communism, wrote in *The Conquest of Bread* that "we cannot hold with the collectivists that payment proportionate to the hours of labour rendered by each would be an ideal arrangement, or even a step in the right direction." According to

[81] An important exception is the voucher, which can be allocated without state coercion (Wetzel, 2022). Highlighting the distinction between voucher-based and monetary incomes, the Parecon website explains that "[Voucher-based] Income, and therefore currency in a Participatory Economy is non-transferrable […] currency is simply an accounting unit used to keep track of consumption rights." Participatory Economy Project. (n.d.). *Is there money in a Participatory Economy?* Retrieved August 25, 2022, from https://participatoryeconomy.org/faqs/is-there-money-in-a-participatory-economy/

Kropotkin, "we have given too much to counting. […] we have let ourselves be influenced into *giving* only to *receive*" (p. 165).

Even without worker wages, communism should not be impossible to achieve because, as Jacobs and Shapiro (2000, p. 259) observe, "Human nature does not necessarily dictate that self-interest must be what people truly care about." With regard to the workforce, "employment is sought for various reasons – not just to receive an income" (Sen, 1999, p. 130). I see two likely motives for contributing to the public sphere voluntarily. The first is the *expressive benefits* accruing to the individual worker (i.e., the enjoyment of contributing to the community, especially for those more civically inclined by nature). In a similar vein, Reich (2015, p. 215) refers to "a time when many jobs were considered 'callings', expressing a deeply personal commitment rather than simply a means of acquiring money." As another example, Colin Ward (2011, pp. 276–7) refers to a mutual aid-like motivation in the Swiss Confederacy, where in "the civic sense there is so well-developed a tradition that the rich communes come to the rescue of the poor communes, out of a sense of social responsibility." Furthermore, in Chiapas, Mexico, El Cambalache's "moneyless exchange-based economy" gives volunteers "a sense of accomplishment and worth" (Araujo, 2018).

A second reason to volunteer is the more *diffuse benefits* of living in a free and equal society. The Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico, for example, have sustained communism with the help of strong solidaristic norms (Clark, 2019, p. 120; Araujo, 2018), as have the cantons of Rojava (Dirik, 2020, p. 221). In *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902), Kropotkin wrote that "It is not love to my neighbor – whom I often do not know at all – which induces me to seize a pail of water and to rush towards his house when I see it on fire; it is a far wider, even though more vague feeling or instinct of human solidarity and sociability which moves me."[82]

Given its reliance on voluntary contributions of workers (i.e., not relying on worker remuneration financed via compulsory state taxes), communism can be understood as the primary economic system of the post-state public economic sphere (as well as in prefigured autonomous zones such as Chiapas, Mexico[83]). So defined, communism and collectivism can – like formal and informal political institutions (Chap. 2) and public and private economic spheres (Chap. 3) – be "mixed" during the transitionary period of libertarian social democracy. That is, communism might be achieved in some sectors and/or polities while in others collectivist remuneration might still be needed to limit free riding.

[82] Kropotkin, P. (1902). *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/petr-kropotkin-mutual-aid-a-factor-of-evolution

[83] For an example of communism sustained at a regional level over many years, see John Clark's (2019, pp. 97–125) discussion of the Zapatistas in *Between Earth and Empire*. Araujo (2018) also highlights numerous successes in Chiapas, Mexico.

3.6 Conclusion

Economically liberal authors sometimes stress the importance of economic inequality as a necessary outgrowth of (and spur toward) a prosperous society. For example, in *The Constitution of Liberty,* Hayek (2011 [1960], p. 148) argues that "if the result of individual liberty did not demonstrate that some manners of living are more successful than others, much of the case for it would vanish." At the same time, Hayek also stresses the importance of equal opportunity: "[A] society in which only the politically privileged are allowed to rise, or where those who rise first gain political power and use it to keep the others down, would be no better than an egalitarian society" (p. 102).

In this chapter, it has been argued that a mixed economy is needed to strike an equal liberty maximizing balance between private property rights and positive rights to essential goods and services, both recognized in the UDHR. On the one hand, this does not seem like too radical an idea as many countries have exhibited a tendency toward social democracy.[84] On the other hand, privatization has been a cornerstone of the neoliberal paradigm, which arose in the 1980s, and cultural concerns about socialism still seem to outweigh concerns about capitalism.[85] Thus, although a balanced mixed economy is a centrist idea, compared to the status quo it may seem radical to many.

How can societies transition from the current *vicious cycle* where privatization empowers political elites with a neoliberal agenda, to a *virtuous cycle* where a properly balanced mixed economy increases popular support for equality?[86] In the USA at least achieving and sustaining such a balance will require a social revolution, successfully carried out in three realms: *political-institutional* (achieving a new US Constitution), *socioeconomic* (transitioning to an egalitarian society), and *cultural-ideological* (building consensus on libertarian social democratic objectives). In the

[84] For example, in the UK, the NHS enjoys a "sacred status" among the public (Miller, 2019, p. 78). Even within the USA, "By the early 1900s, there was also a major growth in the movement for public ownership of the streetcar companies […] and utilities such as water, electric power, and telephone grids" (Wetzel, 2022, p. 108). Also, the progressive tax systems used in the USA and UK in the mid-twentieth century "is part of our common heritage" (Piketty, 2020, p. 454). Moreover, in Sweden after World War II, the major parties "came to accept the basic tenets of social democracy" (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019, p. 471; Albertus & Menaldo, 2018, p. 174).

[85] For example, university tuition fees in the USA have increased from insignificant after World War II to a comparatively high level today. In the area of health care, Acemoglu and Robinson (2019, p. 332) note that, in the USA, "When Obamacare attempted to introduce a public option to give people access to low-cost insurance, this was shot down for being too reliant on the public sector."

[86] In his book *Saving Capitalism*, Robert Reich (2015, pp. 83–84), describes these cycles as follows: "The [market] mechanism creates and perpetuates a vicious cycle: Economic dominance feeds political power, and political power further enlarges economic dominance." Meanwhile, there can also be "a virtuous cycle in which widely shared prosperity generates more inclusive political institutions, which in turn organize the market in ways that further broaden the gains from growth and expand opportunity."

next chapter, I discuss anarchism in the cultural realm, before moving on to the topic of social revolution in Part II.

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Chapter 4
Anarchism in the Cultural Realm



4.1 Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 focused on libertarian social democracy in the political and economic realms, respectively. In this chapter, I turn to libertarian social democracy in the cultural realm. *Culture* is understood here as a more-or-less predominant worldview – itself characterized by an underlying ideology and set of social values (spiritual or not) – reflected in intellectual trends, customs, and/or norms of a community or society within some geographic area (transnational, national, or sub-national[1]) or possibly dispersed, and potentially reinforced by shared demographic characteristics and/or historical experience.[2] Of course, cultures shape and are shaped by formal institutions (e.g., whether or not extreme political parties are banned) and informal institutions (e.g., norms of acceptable speech, sometimes called an "Overton window"). As has been mentioned, a successful social revolution requires revolutionary transformation in the political, economic, and cultural realms. As a determinant of historical progress, cultural factors (ideas, ideology, etc.) are at least as important as material interests (Reagan, 2021).

[1] Sometimes distinct cultures are found within sub-national autonomous zones. For example, the Christiania neighborhood adjacent to Copenhagen, "along with others like it, aims to foster a counterculture that opposes and undermines the logic of capitalist accumulation and national boundaries" (Nielsen, 2020, p. 155).

[2] This understanding of culture overlaps with that expressed by other authors. For instance, according to Reagan (2021, p. 21), "Cultural factors are things that are generated in the mind, things such as ideology, language, or assumed social practices and systems of meaning." Chartier (2020, p. 30) describes culture as "roughly speaking, a relatively large group of people linked by history (and perhaps ancestry) and united by values, habits, attitudes, and a big-picture understanding of the world." Meanwhile, Fukuyama (1992, p. 219) sees the following factors as constituting the culture of a people: a sense of national identity, religion, social equality, the propensity for civil society, and the historical experience of liberal institutions. While some understandings of culture emphasize its reflection in the arts, I will here focus more on its relevance to social affairs.

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Cultural transformation is essential, as good ideas in the political and economic realms are unlikely to be implemented and sustained democratically without popular support. Making a similar point, Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner, while recruiting new prosecutors, stated, "We need people who will change the culture of these offices, because culture will eat policy all day long."[3] Ideas and popular understandings are crucial, as "Hierarchy is not merely a social condition; it is also a state of consciousness" (Bookchin, 2005, p. 69). A justice-promoting culture – prevailing within the democratic transitionary society – is crucial for self-government, and self-government sets the stage for progressive decentralization (that is, decentralization intended to consolidate gains in equal liberty). However, it is challenging to transform a society's deeply rooted associations and beliefs (Lawson, 2019, p. 30).

Libertarian social democracy is reflected in all three realms of social life but can also be understood as the cultural paradigm prevailing in democratic transitionary society during the era of anarchism after a successful social revolution. Libertarian social democratic ideology is characterized, at its most basic level, by a genuine commitment to a fuller realization of equal liberty.[4] To that end, two basic goals would be central to the new ideational paradigm: (i) a shared commitment to the elements of gradualist anarchism – just law, consensus, and decentralization – in the political realm, and (ii) widespread support for a properly balanced and libertarian mixed economy in the economic realm.

Thus, many of the characteristics of libertarian social democratic culture are implied by the previous two chapters, as democratic transitionary society would tend to agree with and genuinely support the basic goals outlined there. This chapter will therefore be shorter than the previous two. However, there are some additional topics and/or goals associated with the cultural realm that can be addressed and/or expanded on. I begin with a focus on prospects for revolutionary cultural change, emphasizing the distinction between structural and individual-level factors. That is followed by a discussion on the democratic transitionary society and, more specifically, views toward the social contract. Next, the goal of maximizing self-government is taken up, concentrating on intersectionality, views toward decentralization, and civic participation. Finally, the chapter addresses the topic of the international community, especially the importance of collective security as a prerequisite for decentralization, before concluding.

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[3] Public Broadcasting Service. (n.d.). *Philly D.A., Episode 8* [Video]. Retrieved May 22, 2021, from https://www.pbs.org/video/part-8-philly-da-episode-8-nh0jj0/

[4] It is important to emphasize the distinction between *genuine* support for a free and equal society (which would prevail after a successful cultural revolution) and the *feigned* support that seems to prevail today in some liberal democratic contexts, such as the United States. Consistent with this observation, in his book *Why Americans Hate Politics*, E.J. Dionne mentions that "voters increasingly look for ways to protest the status quo without risking too much change" (quoted in Solomon, 1994, p. 55).

4.2 Revolutionary Cultural Change

Ronald Inglehart's Evolutionary Modernization Theory

In his book *Cultural Evolution*, Ronald Inglehart (2018) explains his evolutionary modernization theory, according to which a lack of economic development fosters concerns about material well-being among the public, thus promoting "survival values," a zero-sum outlook toward others, and an "authoritarian reflex." Conversely, from Inglehart's perspective, economic development makes it easier for societies to meet their basic needs, giving rise to post-materialist "self-expression" values conducive to gender equality, tolerance of gays and outgroups, and democratization.

What does evolutionary modernization theory suggest about prospects for near-term revolutionary cultural transformation? According to Inglehart (2018, p. 23), cultural change can occur quickly but usually after a longer period of intergenerational change reaches a tipping point. This evolutionary process unfolds at two levels. At the *structural level* – that is, contextually – existential security (enhanced by economic development) eventually brings forth a new generation of individuals committed to post-materialist concerns and "self-expressive" values. Meanwhile, at the *individual level* – that is, with regards to individual agency – cultural values are diffused via education and mass communication efforts. Amidst this longer-term evolution, however, shorter-term "period effects" can bring about rapid cultural transformations.

Looking beyond Inglehart's book for a moment, a historic example of transformative cultural change is found in the French Revolution, as described by John Green in a Crash Course episode on European history, as follows:

> The Jacobins dramatically transformed French culture: festivals celebrated patriotic virtue; churches were turned into temples of reason; dishware carried patriotic mottos; a new 'rational' calendar was created; and clothing was in red, white, and blue – the colors of the revolutionary flag.[5]

A more recent example of rapid cultural transformation is found in the recent rise of populist parties in the West, which, according to Inglehart (2018, p. 185), "implies the existence of a strong period effect – one strong enough to more than offset the effect of population replacement."

Thus, Inglehart's theory allows for rapid cultural change, potentially even overriding the need for an intergenerational transition.[6] With regards to libertarian social

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[5] Crash Course. (2019, October 8). *The French Revolution: Crash Course European History #21* [Video; 9:15–15:28]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fJl_ZX91l0&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtMsMTfmRomkVQG8AqrAmJFX&index=22

[6] Similarly, Michael Reagan (2021, p. 113, paraphrasing Stuart Hall) notes that "even the deep material and cultural structure of society can be altered with concerted activity." As an example, "in the space of a few years Sweden moved from the most extreme hyper-inegalitarian proprietarian system, which survived until 1909–1911, to a quintessential egalitarian social-democratic society once the [social democratic party] came to power in the 1920s" (Piketty, 2020, p. 188).

democratic culture, the overarching goal is to promote a paradigm shift from neoliberal and liberal democratic to libertarian social democratic ideas (discussed in Chaps. 2 and 3). To some extent, such a transition would be driven by structural factors, such as the current level of economic inequality, the more general window of opportunity described in Chap. 1, and perhaps also an intergenerational shift. Of course, individual agencies would also need to play an important role in bringing about such a shift (e.g., my writing of this book).[7]

Micah White's Unified Revolutionary Theory

In *The End of Protest*, Micah White (2016, ch. 7) outlines a unified theory of revolutionary change that brings together four different perspectives: voluntarism, structuralism, subjectivism, and theurgism. With regards to the first two perspectives, White distinguishes between exogenous *structural* causes of social revolution (e.g., the level of inequality) and *voluntary* factors (emphasizing the importance of human agency at the individual level), like the distinction made by Inglehart mentioned above.[8] For instance, the historical timeliness of social revolution (emphasized in the Introduction) is a structural factor (or constellation of factors), while activists' calls to "seize the moment" encourage individuals to contribute voluntarily to the revolutionary effort.[9]

Third, White discusses *subjectivist* views on revolution, which hold that it is our own state of mind that determines the probability of revolutionary change. I would emphasize two key aspects of subjectivism as particularly relevant to the effectiveness of revolutionary movements: (i) one's perspective with regards to who is acting in good or bad faith, and (ii) the legitimacy we choose to bestow or withhold from a particular social order. With regards to point (i), for instance, the elite-class theory

[7] From the perspective of Inglehart's evolutionary modernization theory, it might be predicted that the rise in inequality in recent decades will make it more difficult to achieve a culture of tolerance and non-domination, to the extent that the precarities associated with neoliberalism foster zero-sum competitive mindsets toward others. Such an effect may already be reflected in the rise of right-wing populist parties in the West. However, we might also contrast that prediction with, say, Kropotkin's argument in *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902) that the struggle to survive promotes cooperation and positive-sum interactions. Which outcome prevails would seem to depend, crucially, on the extent to which elites (and some right-wing populists) succeed in directing people's anger toward immigrants or other lower-class scapegoats and away from the upper socioeconomic classes.

[8] Similarly, Lawson (2019, p. 40) refers to "the question of whether revolutions are the result of intentional action by purposeful agents or of broader constellations – demographic changes, patterns of class conflict, processes of modernization, and so on – that take place seemingly out of the reach of revolutionary participants." For Lawson, revolutionary change is facilitated by macro-level patterns as well as the concerted actions of revolutionary actors (p. 44).

[9] As was discussed in Chap. 1, the *weakly deterministic* perspective (Fukuyama, 1992, p. 354) underpinning this book's philosophy of history also recognizes a role for both structural causes and individual agency.

presented in Chap. 5 depicts political elites from both major parties in the United States (USA) – from the far-left to the far-right – as acting in bad faith. With regards to point (ii) on legitimacy, this book's argument promotes a simple binary view: refusal to accept political systems characterized by class stratification but acceptance of the democratic transitionary state after a successful social revolution.

Fourth, White refers to *theurgism*, which contends that supernatural forces "render aid to humans" and calls upon divine entities to do so. From that perspective, auspicious contingent events and exogenous shocks are not mere coincidences but rather instances of divine intervention designed to assist revolutionary movements.[10] Theurgism draws our attention to two potential benefits of remaining open to people from various faiths and religious backgrounds. First, spirituality is arguably useful as a motivating worldview, and drawing upon spiritual themes in making a case for revolutionary change might help to broaden the coalition (as many are empowered by or seem to need faith in their lives).[11] Second, drawing upon theurgism in making a case for revolution may also help to prefigure a more inclusive, secular society.

4.3 Social Contract

Consent and the Social Contract

Demos Versus Demoi

In his book *Democracy Incorporated*, Sheldon Wolin (2008, p. 290) predicted that "The demos will never dominate politically. In an age where identities are potentially plural and changing, a unified demos is no longer possible, or even desirable: instead of *a* demos, democratic citizenries [or demoi]." Similarly, Benjamin Franks (2020) distinguishes between *demos* (singular) and *demoi* (plural). A key distinction between libertarian social democracy and prefigurative anarchist (as well as

[10] The concept of contingency is also central to Acemoglu and Robinson's (2012) explanation of democratization and economic development in *Why Nations Fail*. Specifically, they argue that at critical junctures in history, minor institutional differences can set countries on radically different (and unexpected) evolutionary paths. Przeworski (2019, p. 73) also emphasizes the importance of contingency, for instance, observing that "the survival of democracy in France may have been a historical accident, as was its failure in Nazi Germany."

[11] For example, I find revolutionary inspiration in Judaism, which I interpret as the historical quest to achieve equality before the law. For instance, in the movie *The Ten Commandments*, after Moses comes down the mountain with the stone tablets and encounters a scene of anomie in which people are worshipping a golden calf, he declares, "there is no freedom without the law!" A similar idea was later echoed by Enlightenment philosophers such as Kant, Rousseau, and Hegel, who argued that freedom is obedience to laws we give ourselves (i.e., just laws we voluntarily abide by).

economically liberal) views is that the former accepts that a *demos*, or a republic, can be more conducive to equal liberty than its decentralized counterfactual.[12]

That is, with regards to those issues that inherently concern the community at large, politics can potentially be minimized by building consensus on just law, and decentralizing power to an extent that maximizes equal liberty, ideally at the individual level (i.e., anarchy). In other words, the aim of libertarian social democracy is to empower *demoi* (that is, a plurality of *demos*) via the elements of gradualist anarchism: just law, consensus, and decentralization. Even after achieving anarchy, a *demos* would continue to exist at more central levels of governance (as needed for federal integration), relying on informal (rather than coercive, state-based) institutions.

Openness to the Idea of a Democratic Transitionary State

Where a social revolution is needed (especially where a ruling class exists), there should be a general consensus favoring a revolutionary as opposed to a reformist strategy (argued in Part II). However, after a successful social revolution, in a post-class context, a basic but genuine commitment to equal liberty would prevail at the societal level. Thus, one of the main characteristics of a democratic transitionary society would be some degree of openness to the possibility that an egalitarian democratic transitionary state can yield a net gain in equal liberty over its decentralized counterfactual (even if one disagrees that centralization would maximize equal liberty in any particular case). Establishing a social contract in a democratic transitionary society involves, first, identifying the equal liberty-maximizing level of formal power (national or sub-national[13]), and more-or-less consensually establishing a democratic transitionary state at that level.[14]

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[12] As was implied by the philosophy of history described in Chap. 1, this book's argument is republican in the sense that it focuses on optimal ways to organize a unified, single society – *the demos*. Roughly corresponding with that view, in his book *Just Freedom*, Philip Pettit (2014, p. 6) describes the meaning of the term republic in the context of Ancient Rome as follows: "A republic, as it came to be conceptualized, is nothing more and nothing less than a community organized around these ideas of equality before and equality over the law." However, as was stressed in the Introduction, the essential difference between libertarian social democracy and liberal republicanism is the former's willingness to take the risks associated with progressive decentralization in pursuit of a fuller realization of equal liberty.

[13] It is possible that, if self-government was sufficiently diffused during the social revolution, establishing formal governance at a sub-national (rather than national) level would be equal liberty maximizing. However, at least as a starting point, gradualist anarchism should aim for social revolution at the prevailing level of sovereignty – today, the nation-state level. If we lived in a world of city states, then it would be optimal to focus our revolutionary efforts at that level, and so on.

[14] A potential critique of this vision is that it would be difficult for a democratic polity to act swiftly and collectively to make numerous political decisions concerning the level of decentralization and other important matters affecting society. A strong emphasis on civic participation in the democratic transitionary society (discussed below) would, of course, help to overcome that challenge. To some extent, that concern can also be addressed in the design of political institutions. For

Emphasis on Decentralization

Like libertarian social democracy, John Rawls's theory of justice emphasizes the primacy of equal liberty, voting for the public good (from behind a veil of ignorance), and accepting a role for state power in maximizing equal liberty. The reconciliation of individual liberty and republicanism (i.e., a *demos*) in this book resembles the social contract theory insight traceable from Rousseau, through Kant, then Hegel, and on to Rawls. As Rawls' (1971, p. 225) explains in *A Theory of Justice*, "Kant's main aim is to deepen and justify Rousseau's idea that liberty is acting in accordance with a law that we give ourselves. And this leads not to a morality of austere command but to an ethic of mutual respect and self-esteem." As was emphasized in Chap. 1, however, libertarian social democracy can be ontologically distinguished from liberal republicanism by the former's normative emphasis on decentralization. That is, libertarian social democracy argues that a fuller realization of freedom and equality – or, more tersely, *equal liberty* – requires progressive decentralization and optimistically accepts that this can potentially yield a net gain in equal liberty (more on this below).[15]

Division and Loyal Opposition

Consensual Norms Are Conducive to Equal Liberty

The republican aspect of gradualist anarchism (emphasizing the need for collective decision-making among a *demos*, or populace), as well as the understanding that consensus on just law is a prerequisite for progressive decentralization, suggests that a proclivity to abide by those laws that are just with a higher degree of certainty, as opposed to a tendency toward defiance of laws, may be more conducive to the advancement of equal liberty. That is, after a successful social revolution, a social norm favoring objectivity and consensus would be more conducive to anarchist progress than hyper-individualistic, nihilistic, and/or contrarian norms. James M. Buchanan (2000 [1975], p. 169) makes a related point in the following passage:

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instance, a unicameral-parliamentary (rather than a bicameral-presidential) system might help expedite collective decisions among the *demos* (political institutions are discussed in Chap. 7).

[15] There are, of course, some note-worthy aspects of decentralization found in classical republican social contract theory. For instance, in *On the Social Contract*, Rousseau favored city-states about the size of Geneva as an appropriate setting for direct democracy and a realization of the General Will. One might note that, like libertarian social democracy, contemporary liberal-republicanism also favors decentralization in the form of subsidiarity and devolution (e.g., in the UK). However, liberal-republicanism still views the nation-state as a permanent fixture of the political landscape. Summarizing Rousseau's view, Treisman (2007, pp. 288-9) concludes that "decentralization was never more than a distant second best," and that "the arrangement [Rousseau] describes sounds like one of centralized representative government, with strong protections built in for the provinces."

> [O]ne of the most important ethical precepts may well be that of obedience to and respect for formalized law, as such. If individuals place a high value on obedience to law, as laid down through observed political-decision processes, utility-maximizing norms may produce surprising adherence even in the total absence of enforcement and punishment instruments.

Also relevant is Christopher Jencks's (1990, p. 64) observation that, "If all members engage in subtle cheating, the organization must reduce the amount of discretion through more extensive policing." Such statements dovetail with this book's assertion that consensus building (i.e., promoting voluntary compliance with just law) can set the stage for progressive decentralization. Even on essentially contested matters (i.e., matters over which parties can reasonably disagree), a norm of "conflictual consensus" (Mouffe, 2013) with alternations in power between parties or coalitions in a context of legitimate democratic institutions (i.e., amidst a norm of loyal opposition) seems most conducive to the advancement of equal liberty.[16]

What Counts as Consent? Early Modern Perspectives

What level of consent would be required for the legitimacy of the democratic transitionary state? And, more basically, what counts as consent in a social contract? That latter question is, of course, an old one in political philosophy. Thomas Hobbes (1994 [1651]), for instance, argued in *Leviathan* that a regime is lawful if it is protecting you, but that you cannot separate this from the sovereign's ability to kill you! Thus, for Hobbes, consent under threat is still voluntary.[17] In contrast to Hobbes' extreme position, John Locke (2003 [1689]), in his *Second Treatise on Government,* argued that people born into a state do not necessarily grant their consent to the social contract, although consent is implied by residency, especially when such individuals use government services (Chap. 8, §118–9, pp. 321–2).

Jean Jacques Rousseau, in his book *On the Social Contract* (1987 [1762]), seemed to agree with Locke, observing that "Once the state is instituted, residency implies consent. To inhabit the territory is to submit to sovereignty" (Bk. IV, Ch. 2, p. 205). In contrast to Locke and Rousseau, David Hume, in his short book *Of the Original Contract* (1748), argued that, because most people lack the resources to emigrate, residency itself cannot be interpreted as tacit consent.[18] Instead, Hume

[16] This notion of loyal opposition corresponds roughly with Mouffe's idea of *agonistic* politics, while revolutionary opposition is more *antagonistic* in nature, seeking to challenge the system itself. With antagonistic conflict, "the combatants promote their own identity in uncompromising ways and seek to crush their opponents – [and this] tends to destroy the democratic conversation that builds on mutual respect" (summarized by Ansell & Torfing, 2021, p. 20).

[17] Fadi Akil. (2022, Sep. 30). *Thomas Hobbes | In Our Time [BBC 2005]* [Video; 36:30–41:25]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYYo_5rq1ro

[18] Hume, D. (1748). *Of the Original Contract*. Home Page - Chad Vance. Retrieved January 20, 2023, from https://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil215/Hume.pdf

argued that we accept our government for practical reasons.[19] As will be explained below, the libertarian social democracy view toward social contract consent reflects a blend of Rousseauian and Humean views.

Consent in the Democratic Transitionary Society

In *On the Social Contract*, Rousseau (Bk. IV, Ch. 2, p. 205) wrote that "There is but one law that by its nature requires unanimous consent. This is the social compact." From the libertarian social democratic perspective, support for the democratic transitionary state (or at least compliance with equal liberty maximizing laws) is a prerequisite to its withering away. That is, the need for a social contract stems from the failure of individuals to meet their obligation to act in accordance with equal liberty. Establishing a social contract (from behind a veil of ignorance) is not redundant to the pursuit of equal liberty if the number of self-governing actors (that is, those complying with just laws) falls short of the number of actors (a "critical mass") needed to avoid bad anarchy. By contrast, the achievement and sustainment of consensus on a just constitution suggest that a formal social contract is no longer needed in the pursuit of equal liberty.

Given the lack of unanimous support for the social contract, would it be justified to force independents (i.e., non-consenting individuals) to comply with the laws? Yes, if the law itself is just and is enforced with due process. In other words, the democratic transitionary society has the right to defend itself from independents' attacks on equal liberty. It may also be justified to tax independents, if they continue to use taxpayer-funded goods and services (public roads, mail delivery, national defense, etc.) in order to prevent free riding. It might also be added that, in a post-revolution egalitarian setting, it would, generally speaking, be easier for individuals to exit to a more preferred polity, strengthening the argument that residency itself counts as tacit consent.

In sum, how does the libertarian social democratic view of the social contract fit in with the early modern perspectives mentioned above? On the one hand, this book's argument aligns with the Rousseauian view that conformity with the social contract implies not a morality of austere command but rather an ethic of mutual respect and self-esteem. In other words, acceptance of a just constitution is consistent with self-government. On the other hand, the argument aligns with Hume's perspective that the state be accepted as a matter of practical necessity (to maximize equal liberty) rather than requiring unanimous consent as a prerequisite for its just establishment. That is, social contract legitimacy is viewed here not as a binary "either-or" (whether or not unanimity is achieved), but rather as a continuous variable equivalent to that level of consent achieved within the community, the

[19] Like Hume, market anarchists are skeptical that a state can achieve the status of a social contract with full popular consent. For instance, Chartier (2020, p. 129) argues that "In fact, monopolistic governments are illegitimate, because they don't rest on the consent their supporters often claim they do."

maximization (and sustainment) of which renders it redundant in the pursuit of equal liberty.

Loyal Opposition and Decentralization

As was explained in Chap. 2, progressive decentralization is less likely to maximize equal liberty if there is a lack of consent on a just social contract (in which the principle of equal liberty is enshrined). However, once the democratic transitionary state achieves and sustains a critical mass of legitimacy (i.e., support), progressive decentralization can potentially yield a net gain in equal liberty. This potential exists, even with ongoing divisions over specific political issues at the national level, given a norm of loyal opposition that ensures that minorities will voluntarily comply with those just outcomes they essentially contest.[20]

After a successful social revolution, political divisions would be reduced to those over essentially contested issues (while the more certainly just outcomes would be agreed upon and thus de-politicized). Still, preferences over more specific issues would continue to differ in a variety of ways, even within a democratic transitionary society. As I have argued, the legitimacy of the democratic transitionary state can be maintained, even with ongoing political divisions, so long as the opposition remains loyal to the central goal of anarchism embodied in the democratic transitionary state's constitution. Eventually, political decentralization can yield a net gain in equal liberty, so long as the norm of loyal opposition is strong enough such that political minorities comply with the just laws they essentially contest voluntarily, eliminating the need for formal law enforcement.

4.4 Promoting Self-Government

The Cage of Norms

Before we go on, it may be worth echoing some of the key definitions provided in Chap. 2 (as such terms will be used in the following discussion). *Just laws* are defined here as those laws that advance or at least do not undermine equal liberty.

[20] As was mentioned in Chap. 2, with *essential contestation*, reasonable parties acting in good faith (i.e., from behind a veil of ignorance) disagree over which outcome is more conducive to the public good, not to be confused with situations where groups seeking to advance their own private interests engage in strategic opposition. In the contemporary neoliberal era, most politics (at least in the USA) seems to be driven by strategic opposition rather than essential contestation. Indeed, one could plausibly argue that, in the contemporary US, *politics itself* is basically a conservative strategy to put the brakes on social progress. As Krugman (2020, p. 3) observes, "given the realities of money and power, in modern America, most of the politicization of everything reflects pressure from the right." In contrast to Marxism, however, libertarian social democracy does not see class-driven strategic opposition as an inevitable characteristic of politics.

The realization of equal liberty is understood here to entail the maximization of (i) *self-government*, that is, the extent to which individuals understand and voluntarily comply with just law, and (ii) *autonomy*, that is, the extent to which individuals and/or polities are free from formal (i.e., state-based) coercion. It follows from these definitions that a certain level of self-government (i.e., a critical mass) must prevail across society if progressive decentralization (administrative, political, and/or fiscal) is to yield a net gain in equal liberty.

But what if that level of self-government has not yet been achieved? In their book *The Narrow Corridor*, Acemoglu and Robinson (2019) argue that the democratic state (i.e., "the shackled Leviathan") is found in the delicate balance of power between state and society (i.e., "the narrow corridor"). The state becomes a "despotic Leviathan" when society fails to adequately check those with access to state power. Conversely, an "absent Leviathan" exists when the state fails to protect its citizens from each other, in which case discriminatory norms prevail at the mass level and public services fail. From their perspective, the "shackled Leviathan" (i.e., democracy) is ideal because it liberates people from the "cage of norms," while the state itself is restrained (or "shackled") from trampling its citizens' rights. This balance is maintained via the "Red Queen" effect, in that society must constantly strive to hold Leviathan in check.

As was emphasized in Chap. 2, gradualist anarchism relies on the idea of good government rather than a "Shackled Leviathan" that must constantly be checked by society. Bracketing that distinction for now, a key takeaway from *The Narrow Corridor*, for the purposes of the argument presented here, is that state laws, as well as informal norms prevailing in society, can be either just or unjust. This provides a useful segue to a brief discussion of intersectionality and the various forms of domination potentially stemming from both the state and society.

The Primary Sources of Domination

Intersectionality and Post-structuralist Anarchism

Intersectionality emphasizes the various types of domination, such as state repression, racism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, ablism, class stratification, etc. As was mentioned in Chap. 2, in the 1960s and 1970s, anarchism became increasingly influenced by intersectionality – a concept initially developed by black feminist thinkers such as Kimberlé Crenshaw and Angela Davis (Reagan, 2021, pp. 131–5)[21] – as well as post-structuralist understandings of power (influenced by authors such as Michel Foucault). Around that time, social movements "came to see problems of race, class, and gender as fused, as 'intersectional,' shaping and supporting one

[21] Earlier examples of intersectional analysis can be found as well. For instance, in 1948, Communist Party member Elizabeth Gurley Flynn argued that Black women were caught in a "triple jeopardy" of racism, class exploitation, and patriarchy (Davis, 1981, p. 165).

another" (Reagan, 2021, pp. 113–5).[22] Meanwhile, anarchists expanded their critique of domination from the state and capital toward domination found in the "capillaries of power" as well as in our own personal lives (Raekstad & Gradin, 2020, p. 8; Gordon, 2008, p. 20). In a similar vein, in his book on post-structuralist anarchism, Todd May (1994, p. 12) asserts that "the sites of oppression are numerous and intersecting."

How much weight should we assign to the various types of domination as barriers to a free and equal society? On the one hand, from a post-structuralist perspective, roughly equal weights of importance should be assigned to the various forms of domination on the grounds that, as Shannon (2012, p. 279) puts it, "there is *no root*." From that perspective, anarchists should focus more or less equally on eliminating all sources of discrimination and domination. On the other hand, one could assign greater weight to a particular source of domination, such as the state and/or capitalism, as was more common during the period of classical anarchism.

The State and Capitalism as the Primary Sources of Domination

Before the emergence of intersectionality and post-structuralist anarchism in the 1960s and 1970s, classical anarchism could be distinguished by its tendency to focus on the state and/or capitalism as the primary sources of oppression. More recently, focusing on the State itself as a primary source of oppression, Eric Laursen (2021, p. 20) asserts that, "Viewed through an anarchist perspective, the fundamental problem isn't capital or the wage system, it's the State." According to Laursen, the State "has a vested interest in maintaining, if not promoting, sexism, gender inequality, homophobia, and transphobia" (p. 177).

On the other hand, Graeber and Wengrow (2021, p. 361) conclude that "it is possible to have monarchs, aristocracies, slavery and extreme forms of patriarchal domination, even without a state." Indeed, examples of discrimination can be identified before the rise of the modern nation-state. For instance, Jews were scapegoated during the Black Death plague in mid-fourteenth-century Europe.[23] Also, prior to the Prussian Edict of 1812, Jews lacked equal rights as other Prussian citizens (Markell, 2003, p. 123). Furthermore, with regards to animal rights and *speciesism* – "the belief that nonhuman animals exist to serve the needs of the human species" (Best, 2009, p. 190) – as far back as 1714, in *The Fable of the Bees*, Bernard Mandeville (1992 [1714], p. 178) referred to man's "Destruction of Animals without Justice or Necessity."

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[22] Similarly, Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines *intersectionality* as "the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups." Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Intersectionality.* Retrieved January 20, 2023, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intersectionality

[23] Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Persecution of Jews during the Black Death*. Retrieved July 1, 2022, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Jews_during_the_Black_Death

Others have emphasized socioeconomic class and capitalism as the primary sources of domination, invoking slogans such as "no war but the class war." Notably, orthodox Marxism is sometimes criticized for assuming that "racism and every other form of oppression will disappear once the proletariat has put an end to capitalist exploitation" (Kinna, 2019, p. 162).[24] By contrast, Kinna (2019, pp. 157–60) describes a view of intersectionality according to which class struggle is weighed most heavily while also coinciding with struggles against other forms of oppression based on race, sexuality, patriarchy, and capability. For example, "Lucy Parsons argued that racism and sexism were overshadowed by the capitalists' overall exploitation of the working class" (Davis, 1981, p. 153). More recently, Wetzel (2022, p. 201) writes, "Capitalism has always been a racialized and gendered regime."

From such perspectives, it is not surprising that racism has been used by elites to "divide and conquer" the working class (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004).[25] But to what extent would the various forms of dominance continue to exist even in a post-class society? The concept of intersectionality warns us that the various types of domination cannot be fully explained by the capitalist class system (sometimes derided as "class reductionism"). For example, "homosexuality was a crime in the Soviet Union from 1933 until the dissolution of the USSR" (Laursen, 2021, p. 178). Furthermore, as Bookchin (2005, p. 68) mentions, "hierarchy and domination could easily continue to exist in a 'classless' or 'stateless' society." For instance, Evans (2020, p. 206) refers to "sexism internal to the anarchist movement" during the Spanish Civil War. Nor would eliminating patriarchy necessarily eliminate racism. According to Angela Davis (1981, p. 144), "racism ran so deep within the women's suffrage movement that the doors were never really opened to Black women."

[24] However, Marx and Engels also "saw the need for the working class to ally itself with other oppressed and exploited groups in order to further their cause" (Price, 2013, p. 120).

[25] Making a similar point in his book *Intersectional Class Struggle*, Reagan (2021, p. 54) notes that "The lessons of Bacon's Rebellion [of 1676] for the ruling elite were that racial hatred could be used politically to stem conflict rooted in the class system." According to Wetzel (2022, p. 73), during Bacon's rebellion, "the last group to surrender were an armed force of English and African bond servants who were fighting together. This was a nightmare for the colonial elite. To solve their labor-control problem, the American elite decided on a 'divide and conquer' strategy – to divide the Black and white laborers. Through a series of laws passed by the colonial legislatures between about 1690 and 1725, the elite began to define a new system of racialized slavery." Fast-forwarding a bit, "In the 1890s, both North and South experienced growing class tensions. In both regions, elites had long used racial and ethnic enmities to divide the have-nots from the have-almost-nothings" (Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 38). For example, around the turn of the twentieth century, certain "race riots," including the 1898 massacres in Wilmington and Phoenix, South Carolina, "were orchestrated precisely in order to heighten the tensions and antagonism within the multiracial working class" (Davis, 1981, p. 124).

Overcoming Domination Through Libertarian Social Democracy

Gradualist Anarchism and Intersectionality

An emphasis on intersectionality, and the potential for various forms of domination to continue in the absence of class stratification, has been implied by this book's gradualist argument that state power should only be decentralized when this is expected to yield a net gain in equal liberty – that is, after the various forms of domination have been sufficiently diminished. Thus, the various forms of discrimination should be challenged both as a matter of public policy and in our own relationships with friends, family, coworkers, or associates. To further explain this point, it will be useful to distinguish between *systemic* (statist or legal) discrimination and *cultural* (mass- or local-level) discrimination.

Minimizing Discrimination Through Social Revolution

While it is important to oppose all types of domination, it is here argued that, in the contemporary era, systemic discrimination (that is, discriminatory laws and policies) is largely perpetuated by the upper class to maintain its power and privilege. That is, class stratification appears to be the primary source of systemic discrimination, perpetuating a vicious cycle (in which concentrated wealth translates into political power, in turn facilitating the further concentration of wealth). Thus, revolutionary success in the economic realm (i.e., achieving a post-class, egalitarian society) will bring an end to most of the discriminatory laws and public policies in a society.

In addition to minimizing systemic discrimination, achieving an egalitarian (post-class) society would also go a long way toward eliminating cultural (mass- or local-level) discrimination, as elites (disempowered by a successful revolution) would be less able to influence public opinion by sowing seeds of division at the mass level. However, the extent to which the remaining vestiges of cultural discrimination (at the local or mass level) are dissolved will depend on revolutionary success in the cultural realm (i.e., the diffusion of non-hierarchical ideas and norms).

After a successful social revolution (minimizing both systemic and cultural discrimination), sustaining a virtuous cycle (in which egalitarianism facilitates policies in the public interest, thus reinforcing egalitarianism) will require that a society maintain its revolutionary outcomes: democratic institutions conducive to gradualist anarchism (political realm), egalitarianism and a libertarian mixed economy (economic realm), and a democratic transitionary society (cultural realm). I discuss these revolutionary objectives in greater depth in Chap. 7.

Vestiges of Cultural Discrimination and Judicial Arbitration

A successful social revolution would catalyze many progressive reforms, including the elimination of discriminatory laws and policies and the enhancement of legal protections where needed. Some discriminatory speech would probably continue to exist as long as free speech exists. Discriminatory laws might also continue to exist at the local level, even within an egalitarian national context following a successful social revolution (adding to the potential justification for central power). So long as discriminatory policies and behaviors linger, the aim should be to minimize them in a way that maximizes equal liberty and sets the stage for progressive decentralization.

In some cases, the pursuit of nondomination might come up against other constitutional rights. For example, in City of Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co. (1989), the US Supreme Court ruled against Richmond, Virginia's minority set-aside program requiring contracted construction businesses to subcontract at least 30% to Minority Business Enterprises. The majority argued this violated the Equal Protection Clause as the city had failed to identify the need for such remedial action. Dissenting, Justice Marshall stressed the difference between racial classifications "which are themselves racist, and governmental actions that seek to remedy the effect of prior racism." Even after a successful social revolution, the supreme or constitutional courts would presumably continue to play an important role in determining whether sub-national laws conflict with constitutionally established rights and freedoms in essentially contested cases.

States and Markets Are Not an Immutable Source of Domination

Contemporary state capitalism is at the core of today's *vicious cycle* (in which concentrated wealth is converted into political power, facilitating the further concentration of wealth). The various forms of discrimination are, in turn, largely a byproduct of this vicious cycle of class stratification. However, state capitalism itself cannot be the sole cause of inequality, as some capitalist liberal democracies are more egalitarian than others.[26] Indeed, a society in which free markets thrive in a context of sovereign state power could also help sustain a *virtuous cycle* (where egalitarianism facilitates policymaking in the public interest, reinforcing egalitarianism).

[26] Why are some democratic capitalist countries more egalitarian than others today? In their explanation of why the US and Europe have such vastly different welfare systems (with the USA tending to have a far less generous system and European countries tending to have a more generous system and better public health outcomes), Alesina and Glaeser (2004) trace the explanation back to three exogenous factors (i.e., first causes): Large geographic size (which makes revolutionary movements more remote from and less threatening to the center of power), ethnic diversity (which makes it easier for elites to divide and conquer the working class), and the lack of a major defeat in war (as such defeats can spark revolutionary upheavals leading to a more egalitarian society). While this is a plausible explanation, this outcome is not necessarily permanent; the USA can still get on an egalitarian path, or so this book argues.

In Chap. 1, it was argued that states are not destined to be class states and that an egalitarian democratic transitionary state can potentially make a net contribution to equal liberty. I have also argued (in Chap. 3) that a mixed economy (including free markets) is essential for a free and equal society. While free market ideas have been used to promote capital accumulation (with the assistance of state power), markets, on their own, are not a root cause of oppression either, I would argue. Overcoming domination requires transitioning to a virtuous (egalitarian) cycle, and that requires a successful social revolution, a topic I take up in Part II of this book.

When to Decentralize Power?

How much consensus is required, and for how long, over a system of just law before there is sufficient certainty that decentralization will yield a net gain in equal liberty? Presumably, there is some level of self-government that needs to be achieved and some duration of time over which it will need to be sustained before a community feels sufficiently confident that an adequate level of self-government would remain in the absence of state power. Otherwise, the gains in equal liberty attributable to the enhanced autonomy brought about by decentralization might be outweighed by the losses attributable to increased crime rates and/or exacerbated collective action problems in the public economic sphere.

An added complication concerns *projecting* the optimal (i.e., equal liberty maximizing) level of decentralization.[27] This gives rise to two related questions. The first question asks: How can one assess the level of readiness for self-government before decentralization? In the political realm, crime rates would seem like a logical place to start. In the economic realm, one could examine the size of the public sector workforce as well as the amount of volunteerism and charity already in existence. In the cultural realm, one might examine public opinion surveys to assess whether a genuine desire to maximize equal liberty prevails at the mass level.

[27] As was noted in Chap. 2, a key question asks: Who would have the final say regarding which laws are equal liberty maximizing? Or, applied to the present topic: Who should get to determine the equal liberty maximizing level of political decentralization? The short answer to both questions is: The people, in a democratic society, from behind a veil of ignorance. We thus encounter a sort of chicken-egg dilemma: In the democratic transitionary society, the *demos* have the right to establish just institutions (including the level of decentralization) from behind a veil of ignorance, but just institutions are needed to create that veil of ignorance-like situation.

This dilemma resembles that identified in the concluding discussion in Chap. 3: How can societies transition from the current *vicious cycle* (where social conditions encourage the pursuit of self-interest, and self-interested behavior, in turn, reinforces such conditions) to a *virtuous cycle* (where conditions conducive to the advancement of equal liberty promote a public spiritedness among the people, and that public spiritedness, in turn, reinforces those ideal conditions)? While there is no simple solution, in Part II, it will be argued that such a transition will require a successful social revolution in the political, economic, and cultural realms.

A second and related question asks: How will *the process* of decentralization affect the level of self-government that emerges after that transition? There is always some risk that, after decentralization, crime rates will go up in the absence of a legal deterrent (consistent with the Hobbesian argument) or that labor contributions in the public economic sphere will diminish in the absence of a tax-funded paycheck (making libertarianism unsustainable).[28] On the other hand, it is also possible that self-government will *expand* after decentralization as people become inspired and/or experience a renewed sense of empowerment and collective responsibility. In a similar vein, Malatesta argued that "After the revolution […] gradualism really comes into operation" (quoted in Price, 2012, pp. 316–7).[29] Also, as was mentioned in Chap. 3, mutual aid seems to step in where state-based services are lacking.

Reasonable people can disagree over the question concerning which level of decentralization would be equal liberty maximizing (what I called the centralization question in a note from Chap. 2). For example, discussing the rise of Britain's welfare state, Colin Ward (2011, p. 277) argued that after World War II, Britain collectively "stifled the localist and voluntarist approach in favor of conquest of the power of the state. We took the wrong road to welfare." Like the question concerning how to strike the balance between public and private (the left-right dimension), the centralization question (the libertarian-authoritarian dimension) would be an essentially contested and perennial source of disagreement in the democratic transitionary society. One might even posit a spectrum of anarchist thought ranging from cautious/pragmatic gradualism to radical anarchism, determined by one's optimism about self-government and the potential effectiveness of informal institutions after decentralization:[30]

(i) *Cautious/pragmatic gradualists*: socially risk-averse individuals who believe a critical mass of self-government should be sustained for a longer period of time before power is decentralized (say, 5–10 years).
(ii) *Progressive gradualists*: more socially cautious than the radicals but less risk-averse than the pragmatists, these individuals are prepared to endorse decentralization after a much shorter period of sustained self-government (say, 1–5 years).

[28] As was emphasized in Chap. 1, the libertarian social democratic society can be distinguished from the liberal society precisely by the former's greater collective willingness to take such risks in pursuit of a deeper realization of equal liberty.

[29] As was implied in Chap. 2, Malatesta's gradualism was consistent with the prefigurative principle (which I dubbed *prefigurative gradualism*), in contrast to the gradualist anarchism promoted in this book, which is more open to the possibility that a democratic transitionary state can be equal liberty-maximizing.

[30] This spectrum of anarchist thought corresponds with the assertion made in Chap. 2 that anarchist theory and praxis are best understood as spanning a continuum from prefigurative to gradualist. With regards to the two-dimensional ideological space, composed of left-right and libertarian-authoritarian dimensions, the spectrum of anarchist perspectives on the centralization question (from prefigurative to gradualist) corresponds with the libertarian wing of the libertarian-authoritarian dimension.

(iii) *Radical anarchists*: reflecting a more traditional prefigurative outlook, these individuals favor decentralization as soon as possible, confident that individuals will only become fully self-governing during or after full decentralization.[31]

Beyond cautious gradualists, we move past the spectrum of political anarchism into liberal, republican, conservative, and ever more authoritarian or Hobbesian camps where individuals fear that any radical break from the nation-state is dangerous. At the extreme authoritarian end of the spectrum, one finds, for instance, the secret police, who seem to believe that any moral qualms or hesitations about violating the privacy rights of political subversives will only open a power vacuum for adversaries to fill. These non-anarchist camps (from liberal to authoritarian) generally accept the nation-state as an immutable fact of life and would not seriously entertain the idea of progressive decentralization. However, if the cultural revolution is successful, such groups would be a minority within the larger anarchistic democratic transitionary society (though potentially still entitled to representation in the political party system, depending on how permissive the electoral system is (see Chap. 7)).[32]

Political and Economic Participation

Political Participation

A democratic transitionary society would presumably achieve higher levels of political participation (e.g., voter turnout) than is the case today in countries such as the USA. As was mentioned previously, the number of political issues should be fewer after a successful social revolution, as the scope of politics is narrowed down to essentially contested issues, thus reducing voter fatigue. Just outcomes can potentially be identified in the public sphere via a deliberative process of critical debate, free of domination and manipulation, where participants update their views in light of others' perspectives (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000, pp. 308–9).

The democratic system might be a hybrid blend of representative democracy (with a party system and/or selection by lot) and direct democracy (direct assemblies, referenda, initiatives, and/or recall elections). Jacobs and Shapiro (2000,

[31] The terms "cautious gradualists" and "radical anarchists" are adopted from Evans (2020, pages 20 and 2, respectively). Evans describes radical anarchists as "those members of the movement committed to pushing the revolution forward and resisting the encroachments of the state."

[32] Revolutionary success in the cultural realm might be defined more precisely as an outcome where, in the frequency distribution of views on the centralization question, the median voter falls within the spectrum of libertarian perspectives. Even in that ideal scenario, it is likely that most individuals will not explicitly describe themselves as anarchists. Thus, as Malatesta advises, "[Anarchists] must find ways of living among nonanarchists, as anarchistically as possible" (quoted in Price, 2013, pp. 170–1).

p. 304) describe a model of *responsive leadership* in which democratically elected representatives advance the public's well-informed substantive policy preferences while also exercising "restrained initiative" as needed to translate public opinion into proposals and to deal with "noncontroversial and politically settled issues" that the public neither knows nor cares about. Such responsive leadership "rests not only on a normative commitment [to democracy] but also on its practical necessity for inducing the consent and trust of the mass public and maintaining the stable operation of government" (ibid, p. 312).

Regardless of how the balance is struck between direct and representative democracy, society should be much more participatory, given the joys of successful revolution, restored feelings of individual efficacy and collective responsibility, and even something like a new anarchistic millenarianism. Indeed, at the current historical moment, more revolutionary or transformative changes are arguably needed to fully "stimulate" people to participate as voters, contributors to the public sphere, and in other capacities.[33]

High levels of voter participation are not essential to political equality, so long as the electorate (i.e., those who cast a ballot) is "representative" of the wider voting-age population. As is known from political science research, however, the electorate tends to overrepresent groups of higher socio-economic status (e.g., B. Williams, 2020). This problem would be mitigated by a successful social revolution, which, in addition to stimulating people to participate, would render society more egalitarian. If solutions to unequal participation are still needed, these might include the selection of representatives by lot or compulsory voting. As was mentioned in Chap. 2, voter turnout in Luxembourg has been very high (often over 80%), in part due to compulsory voting, even though the penalty for not voting is seldom enforced (Magone, 2019, p. 311).

Contributing to the Public Economic Sphere

As was stressed in the previous chapter, the communist ideal requires that workers voluntarily contribute their labor and other resources to the public economic sphere. One of the main challenges facing the public sector is maintaining high levels of volunteerism in the absence of paychecks (or other forms of remuneration financed via compulsory taxation). A similar collective action challenge arises in the area of public administration, specifically with regards to the goal of achieving and sustaining volunteerism in the co-creation of public services (Ansell & Torfing, 2021). On that topic, a distinction is sometimes made between *thin participation* (in crowdsourcing and crowdfunding activities) and *thick participation* (more deliberative

[33] As evidence for this assertion, preliminary results from one of my (not yet published) empirical studies find that lower socio-economic status Florida voters are more stimulated to vote by county-level referenda advancing institutional reforms (which are more transformative in nature) than by referenda advancing social or fiscal policy reforms (which are more like partisan "politics as usual").

group-based interaction enabling people to learn, decide, and act together) (ibid, p. 186).

One likely motive for volunteering is *expressive benefits* (that is, the benefit one acquires simply by contributing to some cause with which they identify). Those located on the social side of the human nature spectrum (see Chap. 3) would presumably experience a stronger expressive benefit from civic volunteerism and are thus more likely to volunteer than those of a more individualistic mind-set, ceteris paribus. The other motive is the *diffuse benefits* derived from living in a free and equal society (including guaranteed access to public goods and services, as well as a less stressful and more meaningful life!). While the idea of a paycheck from the state is inconsistent with libertarianism (as it is financed via compulsory taxation), other *selective incentives* (that is, benefits enjoyed solely by the individual) might stem from accolades and other types of public recognition for sustained civic contributions.

In this chapter, I have thus far argued that revolutionary cultural change is possible and emphasized the importance of achieving consent on an anarchistic constitution (as a prerequisite to progressive decentralization). I have also explained how libertarian social democracy would aim to minimize the various forms of domination as well as promote civil participation in both the political and the public economic spheres. In what follows, I pan out from the domestic to the international level of analysis, focusing primarily on matters of international security as well as briefly addressing the topics of territorial demarcation and environmental cooperation.

4.5 International Community

Offensive Realism and Collective Security

Realist Skepticism About Collective Security

The core idea of *collective security*, found in the United Nations (UN) Charter of 1945 as well as Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949, is that an attack on one member state is an attack on all members of the community. In theory, collective security is achieved when member states credibly commit to intervene (militarily, if necessary) on behalf of any attacked country, thus deterring any would-be aggressor. However, collective security creates a free-rider problem where states prefer to enjoy the benefits of international security without paying its costs in blood and treasure. Multipolar (or decentralized) orders imply greater equality among states but face a more severe collective action problem as states benefit equally from that order. By contrast, unipolar orders are less equal but face a less severe collective action problem as the hegemon allows others to free ride while upholding international security.

From a realist perspective, generally speaking, the anarchic international system does not allow for sustained collective security. In his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Mearsheimer (2014, p. 53) argues that "Genuine peace, or a world in which states do not compete for power, is not likely as long as the state system remains anarchic." This explains why "collective security schemes, which call for states to put aside narrow concerns about the balance of power and instead act in accordance with the broader interests of the international community, invariably die at birth" (ibid, p. 51). Despite the depressing track record of collective security, it is still an important idea to consider, both as a good in itself and as a prerequisite to a fuller realization of equal liberty.

International Collective Security as the First Stage of Decentralization

The realization of collective security can be understood as the first stage of decentralization, in which superpowers no longer violate the autonomy of other states, effectively decentralizing power from the superpowers to each individual nation-state. If collective security is sustained for long enough, a national standing army (financed via compulsory taxation) may no longer be needed to deter acts of international aggression. If so, national defense can potentially be decentralized to the sub-national level, in which case national security is sustained via voluntary contributions from the sub-national units. However, if such a reform is pursued prematurely (before collective security is achieved at the international level), the decentralizing nation-state may be vulnerable to attack by the remaining aggressive states in the international system.

From Offensive Realism to Collective Security

Equal liberty maximization is here viewed as the most basic social goal, which requires the "withering away of the state" (i.e., power decentralization). The decentralization of the national military entails a transition from a military financed via compulsory taxation toward a reliance on voluntary contributions. Because this will likely coincide with some weakening of national defense, a prerequisite is achieving collective security at the international level so that a strong national defense is less necessary.

Collective security requires that governments adopt a non-aggressive foreign policy and contribute their fair share to collective security efforts on the world stage. Thus, if collective security is to be achieved, it must begin with the achievement of such policies within the most aggressive states, especially the USA. Suppose a successful social revolution within the USA ushers in a new foreign policy approach that is less aggressive, less interventionist (i.e., most troops are brought home and most foreign military bases are closed), more supportive of international law, and more consistently liberal (that is, working through the UN).

Would such a shift strengthen the hand of other powerful states such as China or Russia (as a realist might fear)? Possibly, although the USA and other powers could still limit this without resorting to extra-legal means (i.e., international meddling). It is also possible that such a shift in US foreign policy would reduce rather than encourage the aggressive tendencies of other states. For instance, if the USA were to join the International Criminal Court and hold those responsible for the 2003 invasion of Iraq accountable, the Chinese and Russian governments would lose much of their own pretexts for aggressive foreign policy (which is often framed as a fight against Western hypocrisy).

With such a shift in US foreign policy, the Chinese and Russian governments might also genuinely feel less need to act aggressively on the world stage. In that case, a reduction in the relative power of the USA (following a successful social revolution within the USA) would set the stage for a multipolar order where, rather than filling the power vacuum and becoming a new hegemon, the USA, China, and Russia begin to work toward collective security via the UN Security Council in good faith.

The First Stage of Decentralization

Bad Anarchy in World Politics Today

The first phase of decentralization, from the international to the national level, is, in a sense, inherent to the modern sovereign state system. That is, international relations are sometimes described as anarchic in that there is no global sovereign state with coercive powers rivaling those of the nation-state. As Frieden, Lake, and Schultz (2019, p. 69) explain, "Even poor, weak states have more enforcement power over their citizens than the United Nations has over actors in the international system." Even though there is currently no global sovereign state to decentralize, we can think of the first phase of decentralization, from the international to the nation-state level, as the absence of international aggression (or the achievement of collective security, and thus a fuller realization of sovereign state autonomy).[34]

Another way to think about the first stage of decentralization is the transition from bad anarchy to good anarchy at the international level. The current state of world politics is arguably an example of bad anarchy (where the absence of central government yields a net loss in equal liberty compared to its statist counterfactual). As a thought experiment, one can imagine a global sovereign state ensuring collective security, promoting human rights, providing certain international public goods,

[34] This chapter's present focus on international aggression is somewhat narrow. A fuller realization of state sovereignty would also require achieving consensus on just international laws in other domains (such as the environment) and sustaining voluntary cooperation in the collective provision of international public goods (such as industrial emissions reductions, and collective security). I will focus here primarily on security to simplify the argument.

and protecting the global commons, just as nation-states are more or less capable of doing within their own domains. Such benefits (minus the costs) of a global sovereign state might outweigh the benefits (minus the costs) of the current anarchic situation.

Skoble (2008, p. 95) makes the valid point that, despite its anarchic condition, "the world is not in a perpetual state of war of all against all." However, acts of aggression do still occur, such as the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 or the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014. As another example, for most of its history since 1792, Poland has been occupied by either Russia, Austria, Prussia, or the Soviet Union (Inglehart, 2018, p. 71). Moreover, countries often meddle in the affairs of other countries, as, for example, when the USA imposes economic sanctions and/or blockades on non-aligned countries such as Cuba, Venezuela, or Iran.[35]

Currently, there is insufficient social capital at the international level to provide collective security.[36] For example, although the 2003 US invasion of Iraq was clearly an act of international aggression (evinced, for instance, by the lack of support from the UN Security Council), the international community was unable and/or unwilling to deter it. As Frieden, Lake, and Schultz (2019, p. 67) explain, "The US had an ability to act unilaterally that was not available to the Security Council, which had only the very unattractive alternatives of fielding a military force of its own to stop the US from invading Iraq or perhaps imposing sanctions on the US for ignoring the council's wishes." In the absence of a global sovereign state, the option of establishing good government to deter acts of aggression and international meddling does not appear to be feasible. The provision of international public goods must, therefore, be achieved via collective action within an anarchic context.

Achieving Collective Security, or Good Anarchy, at the International Level

As was noted above, the core idea of collective security is that an attack on one country is an attack on all, as emphasized in the UN Charter of 1945. In theory, state sovereignty is maximized at the international level when aggression-prone states are deterred by a critical mass of nation-states credibly committed to upholding collective security (via economic embargoes or military force, if necessary). That is, the international community would successfully cooperate to provide collective security as a public good. Achieving that goal requires strong democratic cultural norms

[35] It makes sense to draw examples from US policy, as we have been living in a moment of US unipolarity in world politics at least since the fall of the Soviet Union around 1990. This point also forms part of my justification for focusing primarily on the US in Part II (see the introduction to Chap. 6).

[36] *Social capital* is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "The networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively." Oxford Dictionary. (n.d.). *Definition of social capital in English*. Retrieved August 18, 2021, from https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/social_capital. This concept can be scaled up to the international level as a level of shared political will among nations to provide international public goods such as collective security.

favoring international peace, evinced by (i) non-aggressive foreign policies and (ii) a willingness to contribute to collective security within a critical mass of countries.

Collective Security Requires Revolutions Within Aggressor States

Given the existence of bad anarchy at the international level and the inability to create a global sovereign state that might expedite progress toward good anarchy internationally, it follows that the first stage of decentralization (from the international to the national level, or multipolarity) must be advanced via revolutions within the aggressor states (especially the USA, the focus of Part II). The first stage of decentralization would be increasingly consolidated as more successful revolutions took place within aggression-prone sovereign states, rendering them less aggressive and more supportive of collective security.

The Limits of Prefiguration (Skipping the First Stage of Decentralization)

In contrast to the aforementioned goal of promoting good anarchy at the international level by establishing good governments at the domestic level, prefigurative anarchism aims to build free and equal relationships entirely from the bottom up. However, this approach ignores the wider security dilemma emphasized in realist theories of international relations. The security dilemma arises in the context of international anarchy, given the uncertainties about states' intentions within that context. For example, when a perceived adversary invests in its military, that could be interpreted as ordinary general deterrence or, more ominously, as a prelude to aggression. Thus, to ensure national security, states seek to solidify their own power domestically and expand it internationally.

If the first stage of decentralization (from the international to the national level) is achieved, states can let their guards down to some extent (explained below), opening up more space for prefigurative efforts at the sub-national level. Indicative of the challenges associated with skipping the first stage of decentralization, discussing the case of Rojava, Dirik (2020, pp. 227–8), explains why "no liberation can exist in a vacuum":

> [I]t is obvious that the survival of Rojava and other emancipatory projects, no matter the scale, relies on liberatory developments in other parts of the world. This can be seen, for instance, in the catastrophic war in Afrin, where the Turkish state and its second-largest NATO army attacked the area from the air in support of its local extremist mercenaries, which led to the displacement of close to half a million people.

Collective Security Mitigates the Security Dilemma

The achievement of collective security at the international level can be taken as a true indication of peace because the international stage is already anarchic. That is, at the international level (which lacks a global sovereign state), any collective action achieved *must* be attributable to cooperation (via informal institutions[37]). Members of the international community can be confident that they have achieved that much international social capital (or political will). Conversely, at the domestic level, peace often prevails within states, but it is uncertain how much of that cooperation would be sustained in the absence of state power. Making a similar observation in *Perpetual Peace*, Kant (2019 [1795], p. 25) refers to "the depravity of human nature, which is revealed and can be glimpsed in the free relations among nations (though deeply concealed by governmental restraints in law governed civil-society)."

The Democratic Peace

The term *democratic peace* "refers to a well-established observation that there are few, if any, clear cases of war between mature democratic states" (Frieden, et al., 2019, p. 169). Democratic peace theories argue that there is something about democracy itself that explains why countries with democratic political systems rarely go to war with each other.[38] Building on Hegel's idealist philosophy, Francis Fukuyama (1992, p. xx) emphasizes the importance of mutual recognition, "Liberal democracy replaces the irrational desire to be recognized as greater than others with a rational desire to be recognized as equal. A world made up of liberal democracies, then, should have much less incentive for war, since all nations would reciprocally recognize one another's legitimacy."

Immanuel Kant is often given credit for originating the democratic peace theory in his book *The Perpetual Peace* (1795), although earlier references to the idea can also be found (Gartzke, 2007, p. 167). There are different versions of the democratic peace theory. Kant emphasized the mechanism of electoral connection (that is, who political leaders rely on to remain in power and are thus responsive to), arguing that the general public in a democracy will tend to be more dovish (i.e., peace-loving)

[37] I am here using the term *informal institutions* loosely to include all international norms and laws. While some may regard international laws as formal (in that they are written in international treaties, declarations, and covenants), I here refer to them as informal in the sense that there is no global sovereign state to enforce them.

[38] A plausible rival explanation for the democratic peace is the "capitalist peace." For example, some studies have found that, once financial market openness is added to statistical models of peace between countries, the democracy variable becomes statistically insignificant (Gartzke, 2007; Mousseau, 2013). This is not surprising, considering that, for instance, during the Cold War, the USA consistently sought to undermine both democratic and autocratic governments that pursued a socialist economic system. (Although some of those interventions might not be counted as wars, which are required to have at least 1000 battle deaths in conventional measures of inter-state war [Frieden, et al., 2019, p. 91]).

than the relatively small group of elites an absolutist monarch relies on to stay in power. Other democratic peace theories (specifically, those from a constructivist perspective) focus more on the pacific effects of shared democratic norms and values among consolidated democracies.

As was mentioned above, empirical research shows clearly that democracies very rarely go to war with each other. According to international relations scholar Henry Nau (2019, p. 503), "This empirical finding, if it holds up, has revolutionary implications for international affairs because it suggests that, even if countries remained separate and sovereign, war could be eliminated through the spread of democracy." In other words, the spread of democracy could help prepare countries for the first stage of decentralization (that is, a shift toward good anarchy at the international level). If true, the democratic peace theory could reinforce libertarian social democracy's argument that democratic political systems are most conducive to equal liberty, in this case at the international level.

Decentralization After Collective Security Is Achieved

Beyond the Democratic Peace

From the perspective of libertarian social democracy, achieving democratic peace would be one step (albeit a major one) along a longer path toward good (i.e., equal liberty-maximizing) anarchy. There must also be a normative emphasis placed on the need for progressive decentralization *beyond* the nation-state level.[39] A similar idea is suggested by Prichard (2016, p. 136), who asks, "If anarchy defends the autonomy of states, and this has its virtues, could we not extend this principle, and make anarchy a constitutional principle of politics as such?" Thus, I will here focus on the second stage of decentralization from the national to a sub-national level of government (discussed in the previous two chapters) and, to a lesser extent, the third stage from the regional/local level to the individual citizen.

Good Anarchy in World Politics Sets the Stage for More Decentralization

It is plausible that progressive decentralization becomes easier as the international community advances from the first stage (achieving good anarchy at the international level), to the second stage (informalizing institutions at the domestic level), and to the third stage (informalizing sub-national institutions). To make this point a bit more formally, we can compare the expected collective costs and benefits of

[39] As was mentioned in Chap. 2, the term *progressive decentralization* here refers to the advancement of decentralization in the hopes that the anarchic/decentralized condition will yield a higher net level of equal liberty than its statist counterfactual (i.e., a "good anarchy" outcome).

decentralization.[40] The *expected costs* of decentralization are those associated with the experience of bad anarchy itself as well as the process of recentralization needed to maximize equal liberty following such an outcome. That is, democratic norms and volunteerism might be insufficient to sustain public goods such as collective security on a libertarian basis, leading to an outcome of bad anarchy.

The primary *expected benefits* of decentralization are those associated with the experience of good anarchy itself as well as the positive impact on democratic social norms brought about by such an outcome. In that case, cooperation is promoted by strong democratic norms (favoring public goods) as well as repeated interaction (guided by certain institutions), which enables deferred reciprocity. The achievement of peaceful anarchy at the international level implies that a critical mass of critical masses within sovereign states has come to genuinely accept and support the idea of collective security. Whether decentralization becomes more or less challenging after the first stage thus depends on whether the outcome is good or bad anarchy overall. If it were good – i.e., a net gain in equal liberty – the benefits associated with the positive impact on cultural norms would outweigh the costs of bad anarchy.

Informalizing National Security (Second and Third Stages of Decentralization)

Given the achievement of collective security at the international level and thus greater confidence in non-aggression (Kant, 2019 [1795], p. 25), there is also less need for a permanent standing army at the national level as a deterrent, setting the stage for (at some point) informalizing national defense, by which I mean transitioning to collective security (voluntary, by definition) at the *domestic* level. I thus concur with Hasnas (2008, p. 129) that "to the extent that the gradual transition from government to anarchy is successful, the need for national defense continually lessens." Eventually, nuclear disarmament might proceed as well, as the need for such a deterrent will have subsided.

In addition, as was noted above, as the international security dilemma becomes ameliorated, this should open additional space for prefigurative efforts at the sub-national level. Thus, we might also touch on the third (and final) stage of decentralization from sub-national government entities to the individual citizen, at which point the top-down and bottom-up sides of anarchism finally coalesce, achieving anarchy. Consistent with the argument that progressive decentralization becomes easier with each successive step, Condit (2019, p. 190) notes that, at the municipal level, "The need for coercion is reduced, along with hierarchical domination," beyond which "Political participation in the municipality can create a potentiality for post-municipal community" (p. 193).

[40] *Expected* benefits are the *perceived probability* of some outcome multiplied by the benefit anticipated from that outcome. Conversely, *expected* costs are the *perceived probability* of some outcome multiplied by the costs anticipated from that outcome.

In *The Ecology of Freedom*, Murray Bookchin seems to envision the prefigurative building of city (or sub-city)-level political associations, based on direct democracy and confederal association, with the potential for further decentralization. As Bookchin (2005, p. 447) explains, "We know from the Parisian sections that even large cities can be decentralized structurally and institutionally for a lengthy period of time, however centralized they once were logistically and economically. Should a future society, confederally integrated and communally oriented, seek to decentralize itself logistically and economically, it will not lack the existing means and latent talents to do so."

International Pluralism

As is the case at the domestic level, international diversity (within the bounds of just international law and a commitment to equal liberty) would be essential. In *The Narrow Corridor*, Acemoglu and Robinson (2019, p. 491) write, "there is no reason to expect that all or most countries will inexorably move toward the same type of political or economic system." In *The Conquest of Bread*, Peter Kropotkin (2015 [1892], pp. 67–8) envisioned national revolutions occurring at different times and different paces and varying in their domestic economic systems to some degree:

> Must we wait till the communist revolution is ripe in all civilized countries? Clearly not! […] As to other countries, revolution would break out everywhere, but revolution under divers[e] aspects; in one country state socialism, in another federation; everywhere more or less socialism, not conforming to any particular rule.[41]

One risk associated with decentralizing power too quickly is that, for such a move to yield a net gain in equal liberty, a supermajority of polities upon whom autonomy is passed must be self-governing. Assuming that basic criterion is met, pluralism can flourish across the international community. In the current state of bad anarchy, the USA has often intervened in other countries' domestic affairs to ensure that any socialist alternatives to capitalism fail. However, after a successful social revolution in the USA, that tendency would be far less influential in processes of foreign policy decision-making.

In the ideal post-revolution state of world politics, international interventions (economic, diplomatic, and/or militaristic) would be justified under two circumstances. The first, established in the UN Charter, is self-defense: When a country is being attacked by another and/or when the UN Security Council grants approval, countries have the right to defend themselves.[42] The second justification is the

[41] Like Kropotkin, "[Malatesta's] goal was libertarian communism, but he was willing to see progress toward his goal go through various paths" (Price, 2013, p. 176).

[42] Of course, UN Security Council approval does not necessarily imply that the cause is just. For example, although the Persian Gulf War of 1991 is often viewed as a "textbook case" of collective security, there are some reasons to be skeptical about this view. For instance, according to the UN Charter, the use of force should always be a last resort. However, in their statement to the Security

emerging international norm of "responsibility to protect," that is, intervening in the affairs of other states to prevent crimes against humanity within those countries, ideally also with UN Security Council approval and broad international support.[43]

Territorial Demarcations

After a successful social revolution, there should be far greater scope for freedom of movement in goods, services, capital, and people (similar to those freedoms realized in parts of the European Union[44]). There is no persuasive justification for the current system of fortified borders, which stifle the freedom of movement among peoples (Caplan & Weinersmith, 2019). However, even in a stateless society, jurisdictional demarcations would presumably be needed to identify who is affected by a social issue and thus who should have a voice in developing and approving public policy within that domain.

In contrast to contemporary nation-state borders, political demarcations after a successful social revolution might be less fixed, adjusting to the particular policy question and context at hand.[45] Or, a polity might include relatively fixed but more numerous (and possibly overlapping) district boundaries to facilitate the provision of basic goods and services, similar to some special district demarcations within the USA today.[46] This more flexible approach to territorial demarcations is in line with

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Council on Nov. 29, 1990 (the day Resolution 678 was passed authorizing military force), the Yemeni representative argued that the embargo would work if given time (since Iraq was cut off from resources) and that the US was pushing ahead too quickly. Wikipedia. (n.d.). *United Nations Security Council Resolution 678*. Retrieved October 24, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_678

[43] The doctrine of *Responsibility to Protect* (R2P) was first established by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty in September 2000, spurred by the failure of the international community to prevent the Rwandan genocide of 1994. In April 2006, the UN Security Council affirmed R2P, recognizing it as a new international norm. R2P remains an international norm (rather than international law) because it violates the principle of state sovereignty (which remains the primary unifying principle of international law) (Frieden, et al., 2019, pp. 464–6). However, "the doctrine [of R2P] remains a threat to dictators contemplating brutality" (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, pp. 202–3).

[44] As an example of the free movement of persons, in March 2021, the presidents of Serbia and Albania signed a deal allowing for passport-free movement between the countries. European Travel Information and Authorization System. (2021, March 19). *Mini-Schengen: what does this accord mean for the EU?* https://www.etiasvisa.com/etias-news/mini-schengen-balkans

[45] As an imperfect example, within the State of California, "In cases where one entity, such as a city, cannot or will not deliver a service, new districts or governing boards have been created without regard to centralized planning. Their abundance reflects historically high demands for services, citizens' general unwillingness to pay higher taxes for them, and a strong desire to maintain control over local matters, or what's known as self-rule. Bottom-up solutions are thus joined to state and federal mandates in a functionally segmented system" (Van Vechten, 2017, p. 93).

[46] Referring again to the State of California as an example, there are nearly 4700 special districts – "geographic areas governed by an autonomous board for a single purpose, such as running an air-

the view that, historically, state boundaries have been impermanent, contingent, and fragile (Ferretti, et al., 2020).[47] A successful social revolution would also strengthen normative and institutional mechanisms that help prevent the gerrymandering of electoral districts.[48]

Environmental Cooperation

Many environmental issues – climate change, the ozone layer, air quality, and ocean water pollution, for example – are not contained by national boundaries and are thus viewed as inherently transnational. Given the existential crisis of climate change facing humanity, an essential characteristic of the democratic transitionary society must be environmental awareness, as well as policies and practices that help avert climate catastrophe and sustain a healthy environment thereafter.[49] In his book *Between Earth and Empire*, John Clark (2019, p. 25) captures the urgency of the moment and the radical changes warranted by the situation in the following passage:

> In practical terms, the reversal of the disastrous, ecocidal course of history will require a radical devolution of power through the democratizing of political, economic, and informational systems. It will also require a radical transformation of values (a deep, world-historical cultural revolution) that encompasses a rejection of economistic values, consumer culture, patriarchal values, and the egocentric self. In short, it will require a radical break with the political institutions, the economic institutions, the technological system, the means of communication, the ideology, the imaginary and symbolic expressions, the cultural values, and the forms of selfhood that are now dominant.

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port or providing a community with street lighting or a cemetery." Unlike most other California governments, special districts "may cover only a portion of a city or stretch across several cities or counties." Other types of services delivered by California's special districts include hospitals, rat and mosquito control, trash disposal, fire protection, irrigation and water delivery, bus and rail transit, and utility districts (Van Vechten, 2017, p. 103).

[47] More generally, Ferretti, Ince, and White's argument, emphasizing the need for "thinking beyond the state and statist framings of democracy," could be consistent with libertarian social democracy, to the extent that their perspective allows for transitionary state contributions to anarchism.

[48] For example, state legislatures within the USA usually define their own electoral district boundaries. However, since the 1980s, Iowa's political maps have been drawn by the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency. The agency "uses computer software to draw one hundred House districts and fifty Senate districts according to rules that keep population as equal as possible from district to district, avoid splitting counties, and keep the districts compact. […] Largely as a result, partisan control of the Iowa legislature has flipped just about every ten years since the agency was created" (Smith & Greenblatt, 2014, p. 215).

[49] Alerting us to the urgency of the issue, an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report released in August 2021 warned that the goal of limiting the rise in global temperatures to below 1.5 °C (recognized in the 2015 Paris Accords) would not be achieved this century unless huge cuts in carbon emissions take place. McGrath, M. (2021, August 9). *Climate change: IPCC report is "code red for humanity."* British Broadcasting Corporation. https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-58130705

A basic question is whether the very idea of economic development can be made environmentally sustainable. In other words, Is *sustainable development* a contradiction in terms? The UN General Assembly endorsed the idea when it unanimously approved the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. In his libertarian socialist book *Overcoming Capitalism*, Wetzel (2022, p. 339) asserts that growth will be needed in several areas, such as equipment needed in the shift to a non-fossil fuel electricity system, free-to-use health provision, and to make buildings more ecologically sound. Moreover, Wetzel argues that "if the ecological efficiency of production is improved, some element of growth can occur without increasing ecological damage."

But can markets be environmentally sustainable? Some authors, such as J.B. MacKinnon, have called for drastically reducing our level of consumption.[50] Meanwhile, Piketty (2020, pp. 669, 1005) argues for a "progressive, durable, and collectively acceptable carbon tax." Other solutions include cap-and-trade systems, which place a price tag on carbon emissions, carbon capture technologies, or sustainable sources of energy such as solar and wind. Whatever the combination of solutions, the democratic transitionary society should be eager to cooperate in good faith with members of the international community to establish agreements such as the Paris Accords of 2015.

About Murray Bookchin's libertarian municipalism, Condit (2019, p. 148) observes that "He does not advocate primitivism but rather an ethically informed technological optimism, governed by appropriateness rather than power." In *The Ecology of Freedom*, Bookchin (2005) emphasizes that, overall, technology has thus far been used to dominate nature and people rather than to promote liberation via natural variety, egalitarianism, and leisure. Libertarian social democracy recognizes the value of modern quality-of-life enhancing technologies made possible by market innovations since the Industrial Revolution. Without a norm of respect for private property rights and for the individual liberties needed to exercise such rights, technological progress would tend to be stifled and the quality of life diminished. However, environmental sustainability must be properly accounted for and prioritized in such a vision.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed some basic aspects of libertarian social democracy in the cultural realm, including prospects for revolutionary cultural change, views toward the social contract, the challenge of achieving self-government, and the role of the international community in the advancement of equal liberty (specifically with regards to international security, territorial demarcations, and environmental

[50] Jamie Waters. (2021, May 30). *Overconsumption and the environment: Should we all stop shopping?* The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/may/30/should-we-all-stop-shopping-how-to-end-overconsumption

cooperation). Like anarchism in the political and economic realms, anarchism in the cultural realm must be accounted for in any comprehensive vision of a free and equal society. As has been previously mentioned, the discussions of anarchism in the political, economic, and cultural realms in Part I of this book have focused primarily on the vision of libertarian social democracy that would take shape after a successful social revolution carried out at the national level. Having completed that discussion, we can now proceed to the topic of social revolution in Part II.

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Part II
Social Revolution

Chapter 5
An Elite-Class Theory of US Politics



5.1 Introduction

Part II of this book focuses on the topic of social revolution, especially in the USA. In this chapter, an elite-class theory of contemporary US politics is presented as an alternative to conventional pluralist theoretic perspectives. This chapter seems necessary given the predominance of pluralist theoretic perspectives in both intellectual political analysis (positivist political science and mass media op-eds and punditry) and the general public's understanding of US government and politics.[1] As William Domhoff (2006, p. 18) mentions in his book *Who Rules America?* regarding his own class-domination theory, it "challenges some basic American beliefs." Presenting the elite-class theoretic perspective below will thus help the reader comprehend Part II of this book overall, as well as more specific aspects of the book's argument such as the limits of social progress in an unequal democracy (emphasized in Chap. 8).[2]

[1] This is not to suggest that pluralist theoretic explanations never provide analytical insight about American politics. Pluralist theory is particularly useful when assessing variation across or within policy areas. For example, in the decades following World War II, influence over tobacco regulation arguably shifted from an elite-theoretic iron triangle toward a more pluralistic issue network. More generally, in the latter third of the twentieth century, there was an expansion in the role of public and private actor networks involved in policy formation and implementation (Ansell & Torfing, 2021, p. 52). In this chapter, I focus on the relative influence and explanatory value of elite vs. pluralist theories under different socioeconomic conditions rather than their applicability across more specific issue areas.

[2] It may be useful to provide a brief overview of the structure and methods of Part II (Chaps. 5, 6, 7, and 8). On the one hand, Chaps. 5 and 8 rely primarily on insights from a rational choice theoretic perspective (i.e., cost/benefit analysis). Specifically, this chapter will describe an elite-mass bargaining interaction and collective action problems on both the elite and mass sides, while Chap. 8 emphasizes the limits of reformism within such a context. On the other hand, Chaps. 6 and 7 rely primarily on constructivist methods, promoting dialectical progress through moral persuasion and

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In this chapter, I use the term *elite theory* in reference to my own perspective on US politics, an elite cooptation model emphasizing an elite-mass bargaining interaction in domestic politics. Because elite control over US politics occurs within a broader context of capitalist upper-class domination, the perspective could also be described as a hybrid *elite-class theory*, although I also refer to it as an elite theory for simplicity. The terms elite and upper class are used somewhat interchangeably in this chapter, although the distinction is emphasized where necessary.[3]

Underpinning the elite theoretic perspective presented in this chapter is the more general assertion that as socioeconomic inequality deepens within a liberal democratic society (that is, as it becomes an increasingly unequal democracy), the explanatory power of elite perspectives eventually surpasses that of pluralist theoretic explanations of social phenomena within that context.[4] That is, as a democracy becomes more unequal, the connection between economics and politics (i.e., the disproportionate influence of the wealthy over political outcomes) will strengthen as well. If so, elite theoretic perspectives by now have a greater capacity to explain contemporary US politics, given today's high level of socioeconomic inequality. Despite the plausibility of this premise, pluralist theoretic explanations remain predominant in mainstream analyses of US politics.

In what follows, I provide some background about pluralist, elite, and class-based theories of political power and emphasize the ongoing predominance of pluralist theoretic perspectives in political science. I then contrast pluralist and elite theories and explain why a new elite theoretic perspective is needed. That is followed by discussion of this chapter's elite theoretic perspective on US politics – the elite cooptation model – characterized by a strategic elite-mass bargaining interaction that brings together and builds on existing theories of top-down elite concessions and bottom-up tipping models of revolutionary change.

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stoking the desire for recognition. Specifically, Chap. 6 demonstrates the injustices of the status quo and the incapacity of the two-party system to rectify the situation, while Chap. 7 envisions how revolutionary objectives in the political, economic, and cultural realms can spur further progress toward equal liberty.

[3] Regarding the difference between class and elite theories, Domhoff (2006, p. 18) explains that, while elite and class theories intersect, "elite theory puts far less emphasis on classes or class conflict than a class dominance theory does." For example, Albertus and Menaldo (2018) argue that the state will most often be used to benefit particular elite interests rather than broad socioeconomic classes. In this chapter, I will distinguish between *pluralist-elite theories* (which agree with pluralism that partisanship is the primary social divide but view individual parties as elite-controlled) and *elite-class theories* (which see a cross-cutting elite-mass divide as paramount).

[4] Consistent with that view, Robert Reich (2015, p. 172) states plausibly that, as inequality was beginning to increase in the US, "By the 1980s, the vast mosaic of organizations that had given force and meaning to American pluralism was coming apart" and that "The pertinent comparison is not between the career paths of Democratic and Republican officials but between people who served in Washington decades before the big money began pouring in and those who served after the deluge began" (p. 176).

5.2 Theories of Political Power: Some Background

Terminology and Disciplinary Trends

Pluralism implies a high degree of political equality, which contributes to, and is reinforced by, free and fair competition for political influence among a society's welter of competing interest groups striving to influence public policy outcomes.[5] In his book *Men at the Top: A Study in Community Power*, Robert Presthus (1964) defined pluralism as "a sociopolitical system in which the power of the state is shared with a large number of private groups, interest organizations, and individuals represented by such organizations." According to David Held (1987, p. 189), "In the pluralist account, power is non-hierarchically and competitively arranged. It is an inextricable part of an 'endless process of bargaining' between numerous groups representing different interests." Held explains that "There is no ultimately powerful decision-making centre in the classic pluralist model. Since power is essentially dispersed throughout society, and since there is a plurality of pressure points, a variety of competing policy-formulating and decision-making centers arises" (p. 190).

Elitism, by contrast, implies an imbalance of influence between competing interest groups or classes in some public policy domain.[6] In extreme cases, an "iron triangle" can form between the executive agency administering a program, the congressional subcommittee overseeing it, and the interest group most directly affected (Schubert et al., 2014, p. 277). For example, some see an iron triangle in the US defense sector, where members of congress from districts with interests in the defense industry act in concert with the Department of Defense, as well as major defense contractors such as Boeing or Lockheed Martin, to shape foreign policy. More generally, elitism is described as "[pluralism's] antithesis […] a system in which disproportionate power rests in the hands of a minority of the community" (Presthus, 1964, p. 10). According to Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler (2014, p. 2), "The

[5] Comparative political scientists sometimes emphasize a distinction between pluralist and corporatist interest group systems (e.g., see Magone, 2019, Ch. 8). In contrast to pluralist systems where interest groups are decentralized and rely heavily on lobbying to achieve policy influence, under corporatism, interest groups such as labor and business unions tend to be more centralized and more equally represented in matters of corporate governance as well as public policy decision-making via tripartite bargaining among representatives of labor, business, and government. The comparative political science literature has often associated pluralism with liberal market economies such as the US or the UK, while corporatism is associated with the coordinated market economies of Western Europe, such as Germany and Scandinavia. By contrast, this chapter emphasizes the distinction between pluralist and elite theoretic perspectives and questions the pluralist characterization of the US. Corporatism contrasts with elitism in that the former still achieves a roughly even balance of power among a society's major interest groups.

[6] For example, consider US foreign policy toward Israel Palestine and the high level of influence that the American Israeli Public Action Committee (AIPAC) appears to wield compared to groups advocating Palestinian rights. Other highly influential interest groups in US politics include the gun rights lobby, industrial-scale weapons manufacturers, and the pharmaceutical industry.

central idea of elitism is that all societies are divided into two classes: the few who govern and the many who are governed."

What follows is a brief review of some influential elite and/or class-based theoretical views, as well as some highlights from the early post-World War II community power debate between political scientists and sociologists. Since that debate on the nature of (local) community power, political scientists have adhered primarily to the pluralist theoretical framework, while sociologists have remained more open to elite and/or class-based theories of political power. There have been some exceptions to this disciplinary pattern. For instance, in *Democracy for Realists*, Achen and Bartels (2016, p. 225) suggest that political scientists distanced themselves from pluralist theory in the 1970s, and more recent studies in the field of political science suggest an increasing openness to elite theoretic perspectives (e.g., James, 2012; Albertus & Menaldo, 2018). However, pluralism arguably remains the prevailing theoretical paradigm within political science, as reflected in research, political commentary, textbooks, and pedagogy.[7]

Elite and Class Theoretic Perspectives: Some Influential Authors and/or Ideas

According to political scientist Larry Bartels (2008, p. 2), "Political Scientists since Aristotle have wrestled with the question of whether substantial economic inequality is compatible with democracy." Although it is not normally described as class theory, the topic of socioeconomic class appears in early modern republican writing. For instance, James Madison wrote in *Federalist Paper 10* that "the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property." Socioeconomic class has long been a central concept in left-wing social philosophy. In *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx and Engels (1967 [1888]) begin with the observation that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." In *The Civil War In France*, Marx (2000 [1871], p. 585) asserted that parliamentary government was "under the direct control of the propertied classes." Marx's contemporary Mikhail Bakunin is considered a founding father of libertarian socialism and has remained an influential thinker in the history of class struggle anarchism.

Elite theorist and German sociologist Robert Michels (1997 [1915], p. 250), in *Political Parties*, focusing on socialist labor parties in particular, concluded that "[he] who says organization says oligarchy." This is sometimes referred to as the "iron law of oligarchy" thesis. Another early elite theorist, Italian philosopher

[7] David Held (1987, p. 188) observed that "relatively few political and social scientists would accept [classical pluralist theory] in unmodified form today (though many politicians, journalists, and others in the mass media still appear to do so)." While this may be true, the overarching theoretical tendency within the field of political science continues to lean toward pluralism (James, 2012).

Vilfredo Pareto (1997 [1916], p. 49), in his work *The Mind and Society,* wrote, "We need not linger on the fiction of 'popular representation' – poppycock grinds no flour." A contemporary of Pareto, Italian philosopher Gaetano Mosca (1997 [1939], pp. 53–54) declared in his work *The Ruling Class* that, "In all societies […] two classes of people appear – a class that rules and a class that is ruled." Meanwhile, in *The Power Elite*, American sociologist C. Wright Mills (1997 [1956], p. 72) saw a triangle of powerful economic, political, and military elites "whose positions enable them to transcend the environments of ordinary men and women." Mills argued that the widely held democratic view was "not adequate even as an approximate model of how the American system of power works" (p. 76).[8]

Political scientist E. E. Schattschneider "was much more attuned to the real inequalities in American politics." His 1960 book *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America* "is famous (among political scientists) for its cutting critique of the sunny view mid-century pluralists took of American politics" (Drutman, 2020, p. 154). In that book, Schattschneider memorably wrote that "The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent." Joseph A. Schumpeter (1997 [1954], p. 81), in his work *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, established a theory of elite democracy in which "the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them." In *The Irony of Democracy*, Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler (2014, p. 13) explain that, according to elite theory, "accommodation and compromise among leadership groups is the prevailing style of decision making, not competition and conflict [as pluralism contends]." Building on that point, from an elite theoretic perspective, elites wield total control over the political system, and the only check on them is their own sense of how far they can go without endangering the stability of the system itself.

British sociologist Ralph Miliband (1997 [1969], pp. 252–4) in *The State in Capitalist Society* argues that the aphorism "politicians are all the same," while clearly an exaggeration, contains "a solid kernel of truth" in that politicians generally agree over the need for the "free enterprise" system. In a similar vein, American sociologist Fred Block (1977, p. 10) distinguished between "the capitalist class" and the "managers of the state apparatus" (i.e., politicians), arguing that the latter group has a shared interest in maintaining capitalist democracy because their political power depends on it, and because of the importance of capitalist investment to the economy. Thus, according to Block, the ruling class does not need to directly

[8] According to Domhoff (2006, p. 105), the *power elite* includes leading members of the corporate community and policy-formation organizations. Although politicians tend to be in the top 10% to 15% of the occupational and income ladders, neither political nor military leaders are necessarily included in the power elite (p. 154). Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler (2014, p. 62) distinguish between *political elites* (found in the various branches of government) and *economic elites* (heads of large corporations and banks). Similarly, Albertus and Menaldo (2018) distinguish between political elites as well as insider (i.e., politically connected) and outsider economic elites.

control the political system, as political elites already do this on their behalf.[9] This perspective is sometimes referred to as the structural dependency thesis (Przeworski & Wallerstein, 1988; Swank, 1992).[10]

Discussing US politics, Domhoff (2006, p. 47) observes that "private control over the investment function provides leaders within the corporate community with a *structural power* that is independent of any attempts by them to influence government officials directly." However, this structural dependency is not enough on its own to control public policy. The corporate community must also pro-actively strive to influence politics, primarily through lobbying, dissemination of policy ideas (via foundations and think-tanks), candidate selection, and shaping public opinion (Domhoff, 2006, p. 16). While there is often intense competition between corporations, Domhoff argues that corporations, banks, and agribusiness owners form a corporate community that is largely united when it comes to policies affecting their collective welfare.[11]

The Community Power Debate

In the 1950s and 1960s, a scholarly debate took place within the USA between sociologists and political scientists, focusing on the distribution of political power at the local community level. Between the publication of Floyd Hunter's *Community Power Structure* in 1953 and 1970, over 100 books and articles had been published on the topic (Fox, 1971, p. 576). In this debate, sociologists tended to adopt elite theoretic perspectives, while political scientists generally adhered to pluralist explanations of governmental behavior. Sociologists built a significant body of evidence showing that power at the community level is often highly concentrated, with elite business and community leaders exercising an inordinate amount of control over policymaking (Hunter, 1953; Pellegrin & Coates, 1956; Warner et al., 1963;

[9] Consistent with that view, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, the wealthy royal ruler of Dubai, observed that "Today's leaders are the silent giants who possess the money, not the politicians who make the noise." Safi, M. (2021, February 19). *Sheikh Mohammed: disturbing glimpses beneath a refined public image*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/feb/19/sheikh-mohammed-dark-glimpses-beneath-pristine-public-image-sheikha-latifa

[10] One plausible source of this capitalist political advantage is the outside options available to multi-national companies in the context of liberal capitalism. As Albertus and Menaldo (2018, p. 6) explain, "Even if citizens do hold strong preferences for redistribution, and these preferences are reflected by their representatives, globalization can tie the hands of policymakers by enabling asset holders to move easily across borders to avoid redistribution."

[11] In a similar vein, Wetzel (2022, p. 99) writes, "The capitalist elite do not always see eye to eye, but their political views do tend to come together around their class interests." By contrast, neoclassical author Ludwig von Mises (1963) argued that, "Like everyone else, entrepreneurs do not act as members of a class but as individuals. No entrepreneur bothers a whit about the fate of the totality of the entrepreneurs."

Presthus, 1964). Other sociological studies provided evidence of concentrated elite control at the national level (e.g., Mills, 1997 [1956]; Clawson et al., 1986).

The methods employed by sociologists to study the structure of power were critiqued by certain political scientists. For example, Robert Dahl (1958), in his article "A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model," emphasized that, just because a particular group of elites has disproportionate influence in a particular sector, the scope of their influence is prone to overgeneralization. David Held (1987, p. 192) summarizes the pluralistic argument in Robert Dahl's *Who Governs?*, a 1961 study of community power in New Haven, Connecticut, as follows:

> *Who Governs?* revealed multiple coalitions seeking to influence public policy. There were, to be sure, severe conflicts over policy outcomes, as different interests pressed their sectoral claims, but the process of interest bartering through governmental offices created a tendency towards competitive equilibrium and a set of policies which was positive for the citizenry at large in the long run.

Another political scientist, Nelson Polsby (1980, ch. 6), argued that the "pluralist approach" rejects the argument that there will inevitably be some group at the top of a community power hierarchy and does not assume individuals are elites based solely on their community reputation.

In response to the pluralist critics, Bachrach and Baratz (1962) contended that pluralist studies such as Dahl's *Who Governs?* overlooked elites' ability to prevent certain policies from being placed on the agenda in the first place, which they referred to as "the second face of power." Bachrach and Baratz (1962, p. 948) also emphasized that while it may be difficult to objectively identify issue areas where one would expect to find elite interference, this does not mean that such interference is insignificant. Commenting on this theoretical divergence between the disciplines, Douglas Fox (1971, p. 584) observed that political scientists were "surprisingly unconcerned with the study of power" and that this was probably due to "the predominant pluralistic ideology which has prevailed among members of the discipline."

Political Science and Pluralist Theory

Historical Developments Within Political Science

In his book *Elite Statecraft and Election Administration*, Toby James (2012, pp. 6–10) identifies three distinct periods within modern political science: "old institutionalism" (first half of the twentieth century), behavioralism (since the 1950s and 1960s), and new institutionalism (beginning in the 1970s and 80s). Old institutionalism was primarily concerned with describing institutional procedures and recommending reforms (ibid, p. 15). Behavioralism, which remains predominant within political science, is characterized by rational choice and/or "positivist" theories, hypothesis testing, and quantitative methods (ibid, pp. 8–9). New institutionalist perspectives emphasized that "Institutions are not passive objects or merely a site

of conflict [as behavioralism suggests, but rather…] have a dynamic and causal role of their own over policy outcomes" (ibid, p. 10). Across these periods, however, political science has continued to adhere, more or less, to pluralist assumptions about a broad distribution of power while downplaying elitist and especially class-theoretic perspectives emphasizing concentrations of power. For instance, James notes that "New Institutionalists have often been criticized for overlooking power in their analysis of change" (p. 16).

The Inadequacy of Pluralist Theory in an Unequal Democracy

Political scientists have continued to adhere more or less to the pluralist theoretical paradigm.[12] However, as socioeconomic inequality increases, the explanatory power of elite and/or class-theoretic perspectives should eventually surpass that of pluralist theories.[13] Thus, given its traditional attachment to a pluralist outlook, political science may be ill-equipped to advance theories of democratic politics in today's context of extreme inequality. Writing in 1971, before economic inequality began to increase steeply during the neoliberal era, Fox (1971, p. 585) observed that "a political science which does not focus in depth on power relationships at levels other than those of the local community is doomed to irrelevance."[14] In 2004, the American Political Science Association (APSA) *Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy* concluded that political scientists know "astonishingly little [about the] cumulative effects on American democracy of these economic and political changes" (Bartels, 2008, p. 2). Despite such acknowledgements, political scientists "have yet to reach a consensus about the implications of [inequality] for the health of American democracy" (Piston, 2018, p. 147).

[12] The pluralist theoretic assumption of "the existence of multiple centers of power" (Dahl, 1967, p. 24) can be found in various political science theories, including partisan, distributive, informational, and ideological theories. Sub-constituency politics theory (Bishin, 2009) occupies a sort of middle ground within political science, recognizing the potential for greater political influence from particular interest groups, though not necessarily upper classes or elites.

[13] This point is pertinent to the contemporary US, given the high levels of inequality. In the US since WWII, the real incomes of families at the 20th percentile increased by less than $15,000, while those of families at the 95th percentile ascended by about $130,000 (Bartels, 2008, p. 7). Also, in 2004, the top 10% of American wealth holders (together) possessed about 81% of all non-home wealth in the country, of which the top 1% of Americans had about 42%. Meanwhile, the bottom 40% of Americans were, on average, $8700 in debt! (Winters & Page, 2009, p. 736).

[14] In my view, a problem with contemporary political science's attachment to pluralist theory is that this leads the field to collectively miss the forest for the trees. That is, political scientists' positivist goal of explaining particular political phenomena (amenable to rational choice analysis) without having a broader normative framework (such as libertarian social democracy) to graft those findings onto undermines the relevance of those studies.

Potential Paradigm Shift Within Political Science

Despite the discipline's pluralist theoretic roots, political scientists appear to be focusing more on the importance of inequality in recent years. For instance, the aforementioned 2004 APSA report concluded that "Our government is becoming less democratic, responsive mainly to the privileged."[15] Other recent political science studies have found that the US Congress is disproportionately responsive to the preferences of the affluent (e.g., Bartels, 2002; Gilens, 2005; Hayes, 2013; Gilens & Page, 2014) and that "elected officials are utterly unresponsive to the policy preferences of millions of low-income citizens" (Bartels, 2008, p. 2). In his book *Unequal Democracy*, Larry Bartels (2008, pp. 1–2) questions "whether the pluralistic democracy Robert Dahl found in the 1950s has survived the rapid concentration of vast additional resources in the hands of America's wealthiest citizens." Meanwhile, political scientists Winters and Page (2009, p. 744) observe that "Some excellent research has been done on political inequality in the United States. We believe it is now appropriate to move a step further and think about the possibility of *extreme* political inequality." Relaxation of political scientists' reliance on pluralist theory is likely to continue as evidence of economic and political inequality continues to accumulate, increasing the potential for a paradigm shift within the field.

Political Science's Wider Influence

The pluralist theoretical paradigm, which remains central to political science (aforementioned exceptions notwithstanding), has relevance beyond scholarly debates. At the mass level, pluralistic understandings of US government and politics seem to be a cultural norm among the American people (although most have probably never heard of pluralist or elite theory per se). That is, rather than viewing the USA as something like an occupying power (as some elite theoretic perspectives imply), American citizens tend to view the state as *their* state – a social contract that, despite the high level of inequality and the long list of policy problems (reviewed in Chap. 6), ultimately aims to serve the interests of the people and is thus worthy of legitimacy.[16] While it would be difficult to demonstrate empirically, as one of the major

[15] Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy. (2004). *American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality*. American Political Science Association. Retrieved January 21, 2023, from http://www.apsanet.org/portals/54/Files/Task%20Force%20Reports/taskforcereport.pdf

[16] Viewing the state as an occupying power is also in line with the *predatory view* of the state, which emphasizes the connection between war-making and state-building. From Charles Tilly's perspective, "war made states, and states make war." Even contemporary liberal democratic states seem to rely on foreign and domestic enemies (including citizens who deny the state's legitimacy) who, in turn, provide a justification for investments in the military and/or policing capabilities. By contrast, the *contractarian view* emphasizes the consensual (rather than conquest-based) origins of state power (in line with early republican, classic liberal, and pluralist perspectives). See Clark, Golder, and Golder (2013, pp. 100–19) for a discussion of predatory vs. contractarian understandings of state power.

social science fields and the one most directly focused on political affairs, political science has probably contributed to the establishment and reinforcement of this pluralist theoretical cultural norm.[17]

5.3 From Pluralist to Elite Theory

Pluralistic Understandings of Liberal Democracy

From a pluralist theoretic perspective, democratic nation-states reflect a social contract. Political parties, while disagreeing over basic questions of public policy, govern with the consent of the people and, while disagreeing over essentially contested issues, ultimately aim to serve the interests of the public at large. In other words, they are political associations "of, by, and for the people." Thus, from the pluralist perspective, when the state carries out an execution, for instance, it is not an occupying power committing this act of violence but rather the people themselves enforcing their own system of just law. In pluralist theories, the people are viewed as autonomous and capable of holding their representatives accountable via free and fair elections.

Despite frustrations with the political system (reflected, for instance, in low approval ratings of Congress), the people continue to view the government as their government, the military as their military, the police as their police, and so on.[18] And, whatever problems may be associated with the political party system (notably, polarization and gridlock), genuine differences between the major parties, and thus also democratic electoral choice, remain. This pluralist outlook among the general public is conducive to a general sense of patriotism and, in turn, state legitimacy. In US culture, patriotic expressions such as displaying the American flag[19] and

[17] Early critiques of modern political science provide some support for this assertion. For instance, Hermann Heller, in 1933, saw political science "as a tool to buttress or undermine entrenched group or class interests" (see Kinna, 2019).

[18] For instance, polls have found very high levels of public support for the US military. Lange, J. (2018. January 17). *Americans have enormous faith in the military, very little in public schools*. The Week. http://theweek.com/speedreads/749184/americans-have-enormous-faith-military-little-public-schools. On the other hand, in recent years, many have viewed the police as an "army of occupation" that should be disbanded and disarmed (Wetzel, 2022, pp. 77–8).

[19] Patriotism arguably reflects a pluralist-contractarian understanding of the state. After all, if the state was understood as an occupying power serving elite and/or upper-class interests, people would presumably be less patriotic. A YouGov survey taken on July 4, 2018 found that 76% of Americans consider themselves "very" or "somewhat" patriotic, although Republicans were much more patriotic than Democrats. Rakich, N., & Mehta, D. (2018, July 6). *We're Divided on Patriotism Too*. FiveThirtyEight. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/were-divided-on-patriotism-too/

supporting the death penalty[20] are indicative of pluralist theory's cultural presence. With this pluralist cultural norm looming invisibly in the background, political elites enjoy widespread legitimacy and a stable institutional landscape.

Elite-Class Perspectives on (Unequal) Liberal Democracy

By contrast, from an elite theoretic perspective (specifically, that presented in this chapter[21]), the state is captured by a minority of political and economic elites who retain widespread control over electoral and policy outcomes. From this perspective, democratic states (especially those with high levels of socioeconomic inequality) are better understood as predatory occupying powers that exploit the masses on behalf of elites and/or the upper classes. Or, to use social scientist and historian Charles Tilly's analogy, states can be understood as a protection racket where citizens pay taxes and grant the state legitimacy in exchange for public services and protection from the state itself. As Tilly (1985) explained, "If protection rackets represent organised crime at its smoothest, then war risking and state making – quintessential protection rackets with the advantage of legitimacy – qualify as our largest examples of organised crime."

With regards to political divisions, on the one hand, the pluralist-contractarian perspective emphasizes partisan and/or ideological divides, replicated from the mass to the representative level, and a balance of power between those competing camps over time. On the other hand, elite-class theoretic perspectives recognize the governing elite and the masses as separate classes with distinct interests and ongoing bargaining interactions taking place between them. As Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler (2014, p. 13) explain,

> [E]lite theory asserts that the most important division in society is between elites and masses, between the few who govern and the many who do not. Pluralism overlooks this central division of society into elites and masses and emphasizes instead the division and fragmentation of society into interests, and subsequent competition between leadership groups.

[20] Support for the death penalty could almost be seen as a litmus test for a pluralist political culture. After all, if the state was viewed as an occupying power (as some elite and/or class theories suggest) rather than a political association "of, by, and for the people" (as pluralist theories portray it), individuals would presumably be more inclined to *limit* the state's ability to use violence (especially the ability to execute). Pew Research Center (2021, June 2). *Most Americans favor the death penalty, despite concerns about its administration*. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/06/02/most-americans-favor-the-death-penalty-despite-concerns-about-its-administration/

[21] As was mentioned above, there are different types of elite theories. For example, in contrast to this chapter's argument, some elite theorists view elite control as essential, given the tyrannical, rights-violating tendencies of the masses. For instance, Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler (2014, p. 97) observe that "Mass political activism can threaten democratic values." Another distinction between this chapter's argument and other elite theoretic perspectives concerns views on the sincerity of partisanship exhibited by political elites (discussed below).

Political scientists Frieden, Lake, and Schultz (2019, p. 48) point to a similar elite-mass bargaining interaction in the following statement: "All political systems involve a relationship between the rulers and the ruled. The rulers aim to satisfy their interests in wealth and power, whereas the ruled hope to obtain physical security, basic needs, and public amenities such as education and roads. Thus, the rulers and the ruled make an exchange." This chapter's elite cooptation model (described below) emphasizes this strategic elite-mass bargaining interaction but also differs from existing elite theories in ways (described below).

Pluralism Versus Elite Theory

The Elitism Versus Pluralism Tradeoff

Which provides a more realistic depiction of a country's democratic politics: pluralist or elite theory? It is here argued that as the level of socioeconomic inequality prevailing within a democratic society deepens, elitism's explanatory power will at some point surpass that of pluralism.[22] Thus, as democratic societies become more unequal while continuing to appear pluralistic on the surface, politics will increasingly reflect a strategic bargaining interaction between elites and masses – an elite cooptation game – taking place behind the scenery of pluralist partisan division. While elitism's main strength is its capacity to more directly account for the impacts of inequality on politics (as depicted by this chapter's elite cooptation model, for instance), pluralism's advantage is its simplicity, or "parsimony" (i.e., its ability to explain complex phenomena in simple, rational choice terms).

The Tacit Nature of Elite Control in an Unequal Democracy

Some might view this chapter's elite cooptation model as a "conspiracy theory," given its emphasis on hard-to-observe bipartisan elite cooperation.[23] However, rather than conspiratorially hammering out plans in smoke filled rooms, a more accurate description would emphasize a tacit consensus and solidaristic norms among elites, which instill a general sense of how to maintain order over time. As Norman Solomon (1994, p. 111) put it, "There is no devious master plot – only the steady workings of a system masterfully encouraging acceptance." Also relevant, Sheldon Wolin (2008, p. 5) observed that, "On cue to 9/11, the media – television,

[22] Making a similar point, James (2012, pp. 62–4) notes that, despite deepening wealth inequality in recent decades, "the social science literature on elites has been in decline" while positivist approaches have become more commonplace.

[23] In a similar vein, James (2012, p. 229) observes that "evidence of elite statecraft is difficult to find because it involves trying to get access to politically sensitive information."

radio, and newspapers – acted in unison, fell into line, [and] *even knew instinctively* what the line and their role should be" (emphasis added).

The tacit nature of bipartisan elite cooperation in an unequal democracy (described below) is not surprising, as this allows the regime to maintain democratic legitimacy. That is, if it was clear that the primary division in the society is between elites and masses rather than between competing political parties, it would undermine the idea of democratic electoral choice. It follows that, in an unequal democracy, while using the state to pursue their interests, political elites (i.e., elected representatives) should strive to maintain an outward appearance of pluralist partisan politics, as that is more conducive to systemic legitimacy and is a more optimal (stable) way to rule than an autocracy.[24] Given its tacit and hidden nature, it is inherently challenging to develop falsifiable theories of elite coordination, as elite control is deniable by design. This brings us to pluralism's simplicity advantage.[25]

Pluralism's Simplicity Advantage

Compared to the elite cooptation model (described below), pluralist theories seem to have the advantage of Occam's Razor, offering more simple or parsimonious explanations of US politics. Pluralism accepts the most obvious explanation of politics, as depicted on the surface.[26] By contrast, in the discussion below, it will be argued that bipartisan elites tacitly wield high levels of control over election outcomes and make electoral concessions (i.e., provide Democratic or Republican Party electoral victories) as needed to coopt latent revolutionary threats emerging

[24] Guriev and Treisman (2022) distinguish between older-style "fear dictatorships" (which rely on visible acts of coercion) and "spin dictatorships" (which rely more on the manipulation of public opinion and feigned support for democratic values). A key distinction between unequal democracies (as discussed here) and spin dictatorships (as discussed by Guriev and Treisman) is the former's use of electoral concessions (discussed below). On the one hand, unequal democracies (or what we might call democratic authoritarian regimes) can allow free and fair competition between political parties, as those parties both ultimately support the ruling class. On the other hand, while spin dictatorships can gain stability by holding semi-competitive elections (ibid, pp. 120–2), because such regimes are still controlled by a single party, they cannot grant electoral concessions (that is, allow opposition parties to win). Instead, to ensure victory, spin dictators must also manipulate the elections (ibid, p. 27). Spin-dictatorships thus lack the legitimacy and stability of unequal democratic regimes.

[25] Some studies have found empirical support for elite theoretic arguments. For instance, Gilens and Page (2014) report that Congressional representatives from both parties are more responsive to the preferences of higher-income than average-income citizens. Also, Epp and Borghetto find empirical support for the elite theoretic "second face of power" proposition: a negative relationship between inequality and legislative attention towards downward wealth redistribution proposals. Epp, D. A., & Borghetto, E. (2020, June 11). *Does rising economic inequality create a representation gap between rich and poor? Evidence from Europe and the United States*. London School of Economics.https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2020/06/11/does-rising-economic-inequality-create-a-representation-gap-between-rich-and-poor-evidence-from-europe-and-the-united-states/

[26] In this sense, pluralism can be viewed as the theoretical counterpart to politics in an unequal democracy and a crucial element within its larger propaganda environment.

on the left or right wing of the political spectrum. Pluralism, meanwhile, explains election outcomes more simply as a bottom-up reflection of popular will (i.e., the aggregated preference of the voting public).

With regards to legislative outcomes, the elite cooptation model emphasizes bipartisan elite cooperation, aiming to enact elite-preferred policies while maintaining an outward appearance of partisan division. By contrast, pluralist theory argues that partisan divisions among elected representatives are simply a reflection of disagreements found at the mass level (i.e., in the population at large). The empirical challenge is to distinguish between top-down cooptation (i.e., elitist explanations that account for inequality) and bottom-up responsiveness (i.e., pluralist explanations that are more parsimonious).

In Sum: Why Elite Theory?

Given the advantage of simplicity enjoyed by pluralist theoretic accounts, why do I still lean toward the elite-class theory presented below? There are a few reasons. First, as has been mentioned, pluralism fails to fully account for the political impacts of inequality (which has become extreme in the context of neoliberal globalization). While pluralist theory more-or-less remains the predominant outlook in mainstream political discourse, the current historical moment is becoming increasingly "pregnant" – i.e., in urgent need of a new theoretical perspective that more adequately explains contemporary social phenomena in a context of deep inequality. As James (2012, p. 229) observes, elite theories can "advance our understanding by providing new insights [that] other approaches may not have."

The second reason I lean toward elite theory, despite pluralism's simplicity advantage, is that, while some readers might feel incredulous toward certain aspects of the elite cooptation model described below, theoretical breakthroughs require some caricaturizing. As Graeber and Wengrow (2021, p. 21) explain, "Social theory is largely a game of make-believe in which we […] reduce everything to a cartoon so as to be able to detect patterns that would otherwise be invisible. As a result, all real progress in social science has been rooted in the courage to say things that are, in the final analysis, slightly ridiculous." In a similar vein, Milton Friedman suggested that the best theories "will be found to have assumptions that are wildly inaccurate descriptive representations of reality, and, in general, the more significant the theory, the more unrealistic the assumptions" (quoted in Mearsheimer, 2014, p. 30).

A third reason I still lean toward elite theory is strategic or instrumental in nature. Simply put, the elite theoretic understanding of US politics described below will be more conducive to revolutionary change by undermining (or, at least, not contributing to) the legitimacy of the regime and rendering people less inclined to bargain with political elites (i.e., settling for nothing less than a post-class society). Even if the reader feels unpersuaded by this chapter's perspective and continues to find pluralist theoretic assumptions more convincing, this will not undermine the moral argument for revolutionary change (a point emphasized in Chap. 6). In what

follows, I provide a brief overview of the elite cooptation model and then proceed into more in-depth discussions of its top-down and bottom-up components.

Elite Cooptation Model: An Overview

Novel Aspects of the Elite Cooptation Model

There are at least four novel aspects of the elite-class theory presented in this chapter, which I've named the elite cooptation model. These novel aspects are interrelated. They include (i) the theory's focus on the transition from liberal to egalitarian democracy (rather than from autocracy to liberal democracy), (ii) its recognition that some elite strategies found in more autocratic regimes are also common to unequal democracies, (iii) the emphasis on strategic bipartisan elite cooperation, and (iv) the merging of existing theory on top-down transitions (emphasizing elite concessions) with theory on bottom-up transitions (emphasizing revolutionary cascades).

Transition from Liberal to Egalitarian Democracy

In political science theorizing, models of democratization tend to focus on the transition from autocracy to democracy (e.g., Przeworski, 1991; Haggard & Kaufman, 2016; Albertus & Menaldo, 2018).[27] But one might also ask: "if we can still speak of revolution *to* democratic capitalism, what are the prospects for revolution *within* democratic capitalist states?" (Lawson, 2019, p. 228).[28] Specifically, the following discussion will focus on subsequent transitions from unequal liberal democracy (under a ruling class) to egalitarian democracy (post-class). Thus, in the following discussion, the status quo is (unequal) liberal democracy rather than dictatorship.

Elite Strategy in an Unequal Democracy

It has been suggested that democracies are more immune to revolution than authoritarian regimes (Huntington, 1991, p. 29). Perhaps the biggest advantage that democratic regimes have over their authoritarian counterparts is the former's reliance on legitimacy more than coercion (a point I return to below). The legitimacy enjoyed

[27] Beyond the basic autocracy/democracy binary, Albertus and Menaldo (2018, p. 49) make a crucial distinction between *elite-biased* and *popular democracy*, which is conceptually similar to my distinction between *unequal* and *egalitarian democracy*.

[28] One can find examples of transitions from one democratic constitution to another in recent history, such as Colombia's transition to a new constitution in 1991 (replacing its 1886 constitution) and France's transition to the Fifth Republic in 1958 (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 65).

even by unequal democracies makes them far more resilient than authoritarian regimes (hence the *tacit* nature of bipartisan elite coordination mentioned above).

There are three primary means by which elites can control their populations across regime types: politics, policing, and propaganda. Corresponding with these "three P's" of population control, Uri Gordon (2012, p. 215) writes, "political elites have proven themselves extremely proficient at pulling the ground from under movements for social change, be it through direct repression and demonization of the activists [policing], diversion of public attention to security and nationalist agendas [propaganda], or, at best, minimal concessions that ameliorate the most exploitative aspects of capitalism while contributing to the resilience of the system as a whole [politics]." In a similar vein, Matthew Lyons emphasizes that coercion [policing] and cooptation [politics] are two sides of the same elite strategy used to stabilize the capitalist order.[29]

In this chapter, I will focus primarily on politics – cooptation, in particular – as a means of population control in an unequal democracy. *Cooptation* is understood here as the process by which elites maintain systemic legitimacy (that is, popular support for the liberal democratic regime) by offering electoral and/or policy concessions to the masses as needed to demobilize latent revolutionary movements (such concessions are discussed in detail below). Haggard and Kaufman (2016, p. 65) note that, in authoritarian regimes, "semi-competitive elections, strong dominant parties, and legislatures have a broader function of both coopting and dividing social opposition." I will argue that similar elite strategies can be found in unequal democracies as well.[30]

Elite Mass Versus Partisan Division (Contrasting Elite Theoretic Perspectives)

In this chapter, I distinguish between my own elite-class theory (which sees the elite-mass division as paramount) and pluralist-elite theories (which share pluralism's emphasis on partisan division [i.e., between the major parties], but see those parties as internally controlled by elites). A related distinction between these perspectives is how they perceive the ideological sincerity of political representatives in an unequal democracy. On the one hand, the elite cooptation model (presented here) views elites from both major political parties as sharing a tacit consensus in favor of the current distribution of wealth while conspiring to stabilize the system

[29] Lyons, M. N. (2020, June 23). *Cooptation as ruling class strategy*. Three Way Fight Blog. https://threewayfight.blogspot.com/2020/06/cooptation-as-ruling-class-strategy.html

[30] For instance, Jared Diamond (1997, pp. 276–7) asks, "What should an elite do to gain popular support while still maintaining a more comfortable lifestyle than the commoners?" One of the ways is to "Make the masses happy by redistributing much of the tribute received in popular ways. This principle was as valid for Hawaiian chiefs as it is for American politicians today."

through electoral and policy concessions. From that perspective, much of the partisan division expressed by representatives is strategic rather than sincere.[31]

On the other hand, many political theorists (especially pluralists but also some elite and even class theorists) seem to accept that the ideological differences expressed by major party representatives are genuine or "sincere." For instance, Domhoff's class-domination theory accepts the ideological differences between the leaders of the major parties but argues that the corporate community gives Republican Party candidates an unfair advantage over Democrats. Meanwhile, Albertus and Menaldo (2018) assume that there are real ideological differences between the parties but that true democrats (i.e., those with a good-faith desire to serve the public) are often constrained by elite-biased institutions.

Similarly, elite theorists Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler (2014, p. 143), as well as James (2012), accept the pluralist interpretation of politics, where "the first goal of the party is to win elections" (rather than stabilize the political system). In a similar vein, Przeworski (2019, p. 172) argues that "The dream of all politicians is to remain forever in office and to use their tenure to do whatever they want." Also, Piston (2018) seems to accept that Democratic Party representatives have a good-faith desire to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor and thus advises them to do so on the grounds that this would be popular among voters. Such views downplay the tacit bipartisan consensus among elites in unequal democracies.

Merging Top-Down and Bottom-Up Theories of Democratic Transitions

According to this chapter's elite cooptation model, the political elite in an unequal liberal democratic regime offer concessions just generous enough to maintain the status quo – a strategy I will refer to below as sophisticated conservatism. A distinction will be made between electoral and policy concessions, two parts of an integrated system of political cooptation that contains latent (or actual) revolutionary threats posed by populist mass movements. Meanwhile, at the mass level, the opposition aims to achieve a more egalitarian distribution of wealth and must choose between either a reformist or revolutionary strategy (this distinction is further discussed in Chap. 8).[32]

In the elite cooptation game that transpires, political elites within democratizing states (and/or those who advance progressive reforms within established

[31] In line with this observation, President Barack Obama once observed that the partisan divisions between Democratic and Republican Party representatives were mostly "theater," and that, in reality, they were both "fighting inside the 40 yard line" together. Greenwald, G. (2021, January 19). *The New Domestic War on Terror is Coming*. https://greenwald.substack.com/p/the-new-domestic-war-on-terror-is

[32] As will be explained in Chap. 8, *revolutionary strategy* is understood here as avoiding participation with state-based political institutions and not settling for specific policy reforms. By contrast, *reformist strategy* seeks changes via establishment political institutions (including the two-party system in the US) and strives for specific policy reforms.

democracies) can serve as *unwitting* promoters of equal liberty, at best (a point emphasized in Chaps. 1 and 2).[33] It is assumed that the regime will never reform itself out of power, asymptotically approximating a post-class egalitarian democracy but never quite getting there (see also Chap. 8). What follows is a more in-depth discussion of this elite cooptation model, beginning with an examination of top-down concessions and followed by a review of bottom-up opposition. While the elite cooptation model presented here was developed with US politics in mind, its relevance might be extended to other unequal democracies, especially those with a two-party system.

5.4 Elite Cooptation Model: Top-Down Concessions

Elite Mass Divisions and Elite Coordination

Elite-Mass Divisions

In what follows, the basic contours of an elite-class theoretic perspective on US politics are described. Of particular interest here are elite-mass interactions where the preferences of those two groups are in opposition to each other (i.e., an elite-mass divide that cuts across the partisan divide). Usually, the preferences of average-income Americans align with those of the affluent on questions of public policy (Grossman & Isaac, n.d.).[34] Also, elites often seek to bring public preferences into line with their own preferred outcomes (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000). However, as Piston (2018, p. 131) notes, "The preferences of the rich and the public often run crossways."[35]

In such cases, when will the political elite grant concessions (i.e., enact popular policy) and when will they serve the interests of elites and/or the upper classes? And, in cases where the elites choose to enact policies in their own interests rather than those of the wider population, how do they maintain systemic legitimacy and prevent popular revolts? These are rarely asked questions in political science, in part because pluralist explanations of US politics tend to downplay elite-mass divisions,

[33] As was explained in Chap. 2, in an unequal context, states become *unwitting* promoters of equal liberty when social progress is achieved via concessions offered by pseudo-democratic representatives as a result of the elite-mass bargaining interaction. By contrast, in an egalitarian (post-class) context, I have argued that states can potentially become *conscious* promoters of equal liberty where social progress is advanced by true democratic representatives or by the people directly.

[34] As a local-level example, when municipalities renovate sidewalks, curbs, streetlights, and planters, all classes from that area benefit (although the costs of the renovation can be distributed in various ways, of course).

[35] While elite-mass divides appear less common than elite-mass preference alignments, cases of elite-mass division provide an opportunity to evaluate the merits of pluralist versus elite theories of representation by assessing which groups – elites or average citizens – representatives are more responsive to (Gilens & Page, 2014).

emphasizing instead ideological or partisan divisions replicated from the mass to the representative level.

Electoral and Policy Costs

In their book *Politicians Don't Pander*, Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) describe a potential tension between the policy goals of elected representatives and the preferences of the average voter.

Often there is no such tension, in which case "their preferred policies are also favored by those who elect them" (p. 10). Sometimes this preference alignment can be achieved via the manipulation of public opinion, where politicians aim to "simulate responsiveness" via a strategy known as priming: "raising the priority and the weight that individuals assign to particular attitudes already stored in their memories" (p. 50). With this approach, politicians hope to get "the best of both worlds: to enact their preferred policies and to be reelected" (p. xiii).

However, if the tension between representative and electorate preferences remains, representatives face a tradeoff between the electoral cost of casting an unpopular vote and the policy cost of voting in favor of the popular outcome. In such scenarios, representatives can either vote in line with their own preferences (avoiding a policy cost but paying an electoral cost) or they can be politically responsive to their constituents (avoiding an electoral cost but paying a policy cost). In the latter case, politicians "absorb the costs of compromising their policy goals" by voting in line with the public's preference (ibid, p. xiii).

Legislative Pay Raise Game: Solidary Elite Preference

The framework offered by Jacobs and Shapiro described above usefully emphasizes how the preferences of political representatives and their constituents can diverge. While they emphasize the policy costs paid by individual legislators for voting with their constituents (but against their own narrow policy preference), the *legislative pay raise game* (a type of strategic interaction found in game theory) places more emphasis on the shared or "solidary" interests political elites may have in pursuing a particular outcome. In the legislative pay raise game, the policy proposal (increasing legislators' salaries) is preferred across party lines in the assembly but is unpopular among voters at the mass level (Clark et al., 2013, p. 85). Notice that the "pay raise" works as an analogy for the broader set of issues pitting a shared elite interest against the public preference – situations emphasized in this chapter's elite cooptation model.

In what follows, I will build on the legislative pay raise game analogy in two ways. First, an emphasis will be placed on elite cooptation. This is an important addition because, as blogger Mathew Lyons has emphasized, ruling-class politics involves not only approving elite-preferred outcomes but also appearing responsive

to public preference.[36] The second addition, related to the first, emphasizes the solidary (or shared) elite interest in maintaining systemic legitimacy in an unequal democracy. That is, while the legislative pay raise game usefully emphasizes the elites' solidary interest in certain *outcomes* (the proverbial "pay raise"), there is an additional *cost* of casting an unpopular vote (beyond the individual legislator's electoral cost): the diffuse cost associated with any loss in systemic legitimacy following unpopular legislative outcomes.

To illustrate the challenge of elite cooperation, and the distinction between electoral and legitimacy costs, I will next discuss the collective action problem among legislators who must decide which of them will pay the electoral costs associated with passing unpopular (but elite-preferred) legislation (i.e., a "legislative pay raise"). To illustrate this collective action problem (and how elites can overcome it through cooperation), I will contrast elite cooperation in an equal democracy (where individual electoral costs are paramount and elite cooperation is more challenging) and in an unequal democracy (in which a shared concern about systemic legitimacy allows elites to cooperate more effectively).

Elite Cooperation in an Equal Democracy

In a more egalitarian context, elite-mass divisions between political representatives ("elites") and voters ("mass") should be rare, as there will be a smaller (if any) wealth gap between those representatives and voters and less desire among representatives to pass unpopular policies ("pay raises"). Thus, the pluralist emphasis on sincere partisan division is more relevant in an egalitarian context. In the rare case of an elite-mass divide, representatives will be more concerned about their own electoral costs than a solidary elite interest in maintaining systemic legitimacy, as ordinary voters will tend not to prefer revolutionary change, and representatives will be more like ordinary voters in terms of wealth and privilege and thus have less to lose from a revolutionary transformation.

Within such a context, when will a "pay raise" (i.e., an outcome preferred by representatives) be defeated? The collective action problem facing legislators arises over the question: Who will pay the electoral costs? Cooperation among legislators would involve each voting for the pay raise if the policy costs outweighed the electoral cost, and perhaps even when they are indifferent. In that case, the elite-preferred outcome (the pay raise) will be approved when the policy cost (of voting against the pay raise) outweighs the expected electoral cost (of voting for the pay raise) for most legislators. However, in the absence of a strong (bipartisan) solidary interest to facilitate cooperation, pivotal legislators (for whom policy and electoral costs are roughly equal) will be inclined to free ride – that is, to vote against the pay raise

[36] Lyons, M. N. (2020, June 23). *Cooptation as ruling class strategy*. Three Way Fight Blog. https://threewayfight.blogspot.com/2020/06/cooptation-as-ruling-class-strategy.html

while hoping for its passage – resulting in more pay raise defeats than would occur with elite cooperation.[37]

Elite Cooperation in an Unequal Democracy

By contrast, in an unequal democracy, elite-mass divisions between political elites and voters should be more frequent, as there will be a larger wealth gap between representatives and ordinary voters and more desire among those representatives to pass unpopular policies ("pay raises"). In such a setting, political elites are still concerned about their own electoral costs. However, a solidary (shared) interest in maintaining systemic legitimacy emerges, as (latent or actual) revolutionary threats will be more threatening, and representatives will have more to lose from a revolutionary transformation.[38]

Similar to the more egalitarian scenario, cooperation among legislators involves each voting for the pay raise if they expect they can do so and still be reelected. Thus, here too, the elite-preferred outcome (the pay raise) will be defeated when the expected electoral cost (of voting for the pay raise) outweighs the policy cost (of voting against it) for a majority of legislators. However, in the unequal scenario, upper-class solidarity facilitates cooperation (via deferred reciprocity) among pivotal legislators, allowing them to cooperate by voting in line with the collective elite interest (rather than their own narrow electoral interest). This involves either voting for the pay raise (if the policy benefit outweighs the expected legitimacy cost) or against it (if the expected legitimacy cost outweighs the benefit of the reform).

Legislative Decision-Making in an Unequal Democracy

To illustrate the process of coordination among political elites, imagine a hypothetical legislative pay raise proposal supported by both Democrats and Republicans in the House of Representatives. However, while the proposal is supported by Republican voters, it is opposed by Democratic voters, thus putting pressure on House Democrats to oppose the pay raise as well. Let's also suppose House Democrats are the majority, so if they hope to approve the pay raise, some will need to cast unpopular votes with the Republicans in favor of the bill to achieve majority

[37] In both equal and unequal democratic settings, political parties can provide a source of cohesion among elected representatives from the same party (though this will be weaker under an electoral system [such as single-member district plurality] that incentivizes responsiveness to particularistic local interests). However, in an unequal democracy, because political representatives will tend to be from the upper classes, there should be a stronger sense of bipartisan (or inter-party) solidarity among them.

[38] For instance, Wetzel (2022, p. 121) mentions that most members of the US Congress are multimillionaires whose "style of life and privileged circumstances are far removed from the problems faced by working-class people."

support.[39] This situation creates a collective action problem among Democratic Party legislators regarding who among them will pay the electoral costs associated with casting the unpopular votes.

In deciding how to vote, each legislator must assess whether the benefit of the pay raise outweighs the expected electoral cost of approving it. Three factors might diminish the severity of the electoral cost. First, electoral costs should be less of a concern for representatives from districts with weak opposition to the raise (that is, where a low electoral cost is expected).[40] Second, electoral costs should also be less of a concern for those from safer districts (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000, p. 20). Third, expected electoral costs should be less important for legislators with attractive alternatives to public office (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 175; Domhoff, 2006, p. 171).

In the end, we can distinguish between three groups of legislators: those for whom the policy cost outweighs the electoral cost (supporters), those for whom the electoral cost outweighs the policy cost (opponents), and those for whom the electoral and policy costs are roughly equal (pivotal legislators). Suppose only one of two pivotal Democrats is needed to achieve majority approval of the pay raise – who will pay the electoral cost? In such a case, upper-class solidarity enables cooperation in the form of deferred reciprocity, allowing one of those pivotal Democrats to cast the unpopular vote confident s/he will be rewarded later by colleagues. A narrow defeat of the bill (if both vote nay) would suggest the expected legitimacy cost outweighed their interest in the pay raise.

Sophisticated Conservatism

The enhanced capacity for cooperation among political elites in an unequal democracy enables them to engage in what I've called *sophisticated conservatism*, offering concessions (i.e., popular policies) just generous enough to maintain the status quo (Domhoff, 2006, p. 87). A classic example of sophisticated conservatism was German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's creation of the German welfare state in the late nineteenth century as a means of coopting the emergent socialist movement (Magone, 2019, p. 49). As a more recent example, in the 1960s, the Ford

[39] This is not a perfect example of an elite-mass divide, which, in its more ideal form, would pit a more-or-less evenly balanced coalition of Democratic and Republican Party voters at the mass level against a similarly composed coalition of legislators at the elite level. However, the example used here also reflects the fact that elite-mass divides are seldom "perfect" in that sense (in the hypothetical example used here, for instance, the elite-mass divide is primarily on the Democratic Party side).

[40] For example, in early March 2021, seven Democratic Party US senators – generally from more conservative states than the average Democratic Party senator – joined Republicans in voting against Bernie Sanders's proposed COVID-19 relief bill amendment to raise the federal minimum wage from $7.25 to $15 an hour. CBS3 Staff. (2021, March 5). *Delaware Sens. Tom Carper, Chris Coons Join 6 Other Democrats to Vote Against $15 Minimum Wage*. CBS Philadelphia. https://philadelphia.cbslocal.com/2021/03/05/tom-carper-chris-coons-eight-democrats-vote-against-minimum-wage-increase/

Corporation's Board of Trustees expressed support for disadvantaged minority communities, women, and the environmental movement, although it remained opposed to unionization efforts (Domhoff, 2006, p. 87).

Of course, sophisticated conservatism requires clear information about public opinion. Since the 1970s, institutional resources have been developed to enhance representatives' knowledge and understanding of public opinion. For instance, beginning in the 1970s, "political parties developed into full-service centers to facilitate the efforts of individual candidates, offering public opinion polling, media advisers, direct mail specialists, and other professional assistance" (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000, p. 34). Congressional committees also help gather and distribute information to enhance legislators' expertise. Meanwhile, administrative divisions such as the Office of Management and Budget assist the president with the gathering and analysis of information about public opinion (ibid, pp. 11–12). Sophisticated conservativism, intrinsic to elite cooptation strategy in an unequal democracy, comes in two broad forms: electoral and policy concessions, the topics to which I turn next.

Electoral Concessions

Democratic Uncertainty Versus Elite-Managed Elections

Uncertain Election Outcomes: A Core Characteristic of (Pluralist) Democracy

Uncertainty of election outcomes is one of the core characteristics of political democracy. That is, in a democracy, election outcomes are ultimately up to voters' choices, which could change at any time. In other words, in a liberal democracy, elites are unable to rig the election to achieve a preferred outcome. As Przeworski (1991, p. 14) explains, "Democratization is an act of subjecting all interests to competition, of institutionalizing uncertainty." By contrast, in the Soviet Union, for example, "Elections involved so little uncertainty that the Politburo once approved the communique announcing results two days before the polls opened" (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, p. 118).

Evidence of Democratic Uncertainty: "True Democrat" Election Victories

As evidence of democratic uncertainty in the USA, one could point to examples of outsider "true democrat" candidates winning upset victories over their establishment "pseudo-democrat" incumbents or challengers.[41] For example, after Harold Washington won the Chicago mayoral election as a progressive in 1983, "he served

[41] *True democrats* are understood here as those motivated by a good-faith desire to serve the public good. By contrast, *pseudo-democrats* are understood as those who lack such a desire or, at best,

in city hall as an unwavering advocate for justice and human dignity" (Solomon, 1994, p. 84). More recently, Kshama Sawant of the Socialist Party was elected to the Seattle City Council and narrowly won re-election by a margin of 52–48% against a candidate backed by Amazon and the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce.[42] As another example, progressive candidate Chesa Boudin narrowly defeated a Democratic Party establishment candidate for San Francisco district attorney.[43]

Even in an unequal democracy, elites can't always control the election outcome. Looking beyond the USA, for example, an editorial in the right-wing Chilean daily *El Mercurio*, the day following Salvador Allende's victory in the 1970 presidential election, wrote: "No one expected that an election via the secret, universal, bourgeois franchise could lead to the victory of a Marxist candidate" (Przeworski, 1991, p. 41).

By Contrast, the Elite Cooptation Model Assumes Elite Control (In an Unequal Democracy)

Despite those examples, the elite cooptation model assumes that, in an unequal democracy such as the USA, elites wield a relatively high degree of control over election outcomes, especially at the national level.[44] As was mentioned previously, in the current context of socioeconomic inequality, this is arguably a more realistic assumption than the pluralistic view that coordinated elite efforts to influence election outcomes rarely succeed or don't occur at all. Achieving full democratic uncertainty in US elections (consistent with pluralist theory) will require the achievement of revolutionary objectives discussed in Chap. 7, especially the breakup of the two-party system and achieving a more egalitarian distribution of wealth.

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aim to serve the public good on occasion for an ulterior purpose such as maintaining systemic legitimacy.

[42] Beekman, D., & Brunner, J. (2019, November 10). *Amazon lost the Seattle City Council elections after a $1 million power play. Will it see a new head tax?* Seattle Times. https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/amazon-lost-the-seattle-city-council-elections-after-a-1-million-power-play-will-it-see-a-new-head-tax/

[43] Democracy Now. (2019, November 12). *Vowing to end cash bail & reform justice system, Chesa Boudin wins San Francisco DA race*. https://www.democracynow.org/2019/11/12/chesa_boudin_san_francisco_district_attorney

[44] As Wetzel (2022, p. 120) explains, "The corporations and their wealthy owners and CEOs have vast resources they can use to game the electoral process, influence public opinion, and influence what the politicians do after they are elected."

What Is Meant by "Electoral Concessions"?

Transfers of Power as Stabilizing Concessions in Unequal Democracy

For competitive authoritarian (hybrid) regimes, elections "serve as dangerous moments" in which the opposition can potentially gain power (Lawson, 2019, p. 77). By contrast, in an unequal democracy such as the USA, where the major parties share a tacit consensus favoring the status quo, peaceful transfers of power offer symbolic concessions to the masses while stabilizing the underlying democratic capitalist social order. For example, Laursen (2021, p. 188) highlights the role of populist leaders in maintaining stability as follows: "Rule by a self-selecting elite is camouflaged by democratic elections, and popular outrage at the elite's excesses is placated by right-wing pseudo-populists – Trump, Orbán, and Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro among them – whose substantive policies never rock the boat excessively and who can be removed if they prove inconvenient or incompetent."

Electoral Concessions in the USA (Distribution of Outcomes)

In the USA, *electoral concessions* can be thought of as the distribution of Democratic and Republican Party electoral victories across the various branches and tiers of government of the US federal system. For simplicity, I will here describe the stability-inducing effect of electoral concessions symmetrically across partisan lines at the national level. With regards to executive elections, Democratic (Republican) Party presidential victories can be viewed as a concession granted by the elites to the populist left (right). *Simply by being in office*, Democratic (Republican) Party presidencies coopt the moderate wing of the populist left (right), rendering the left- (right-)wing less threatening to the ruling class overall.[45] Meanwhile, the populist right (left) becomes increasingly threatening to the establishment while the Democratic (Republican) Party president remains in office. When the benefit of left- (right-)wing cooptation is outweighed by the expected cost of the latent revolutionary threat emanating from the populist right (left), it becomes rational for the elite to support a transition in power to a Republican (Democratic) Party administration.[46]

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[45] For instance, in a conversation I had with a young African American woman in May of 2017 in Southern California, she had stated sincerely that before Trump was elected, "everything was fine" under Obama. As another example, Doug Henwood observed that, after Bill Clinton's election, "The left, such as it is, has partly silenced itself in the name of giving Clinton a chance" (Solomon, 1994, p. 21).

[46] In a similar vein, journalist Caitlin Johnstone argues that US electoral politics is "a fake, decoy revolution staged for the public every few years so that they don't have a real one." Johnstone, C. (2021, June 7). *Mainstream Politics Offer Pretend Revolutions to a Discontented Public*. Caitlin's Newsletter. https://caitlinjohnstone.substack.com/p/mainstream-politics-offer-pretend

This balancing-act-based understanding of presidential election outcomes can be extended to legislative elections as well, in that a Republican (Democratic) Party congressional majority helps to coopt the populist right (left). Of course, the sheer number of different congressional elections makes it harder for elites to coordinate the distribution of Democratic and Republican Party victories. Thus, elites should be able to wield more effective control over presidential election outcomes than they can over congressional election results taken together. One might also posit that outsider and/or "true democrat" candidate victories have more concessionary value than the election of insider and/or "pseudo-democratic" candidates.[47]

Advantages of Narrow Election Outcomes

Maintaining a close race between candidates has three potential benefits for elites. First, narrow electoral margins ensure that the losing camp of voters will still feel like they are represented in the system and have a real shot of winning in the future.[48] As Achen and Bartels (2016, p. 317) observe, "because the losers in each election can reasonably expect the wheel of political fortune to turn in the non-too-distant future, they are more likely to accept the outcome than to take to the streets." Second, narrower electoral margins also keep both sides – Democratic and Republican Party voters – galvanized to electoral politics, feeling like their vote is more important, and thus more likely to turn out to cast a ballot (thereby contributing to the legitimacy of the political system). Third, narrow electoral margins make it easier for elites to tilt the electoral scales in favor of the candidate whose victory is most conducive to systemic stability. After all, elites cannot easily manipulate public opinion. However, they may be able to tip the balance of an election by influencing the preferences of undecided swing voters. Closer elections also make it easier to control the outcome through adjustments in election administration rules (James, 2012, p. 5).

Channels for Influencing Election Outcomes

Voter (De)mobilization

We can identify at least three channels through which elite influence over election outcomes might plausibly be exercised. One such channel is through voter (de) mobilization. According to Wetzel (2022, pp. 56–7), "Ever since the right to vote

[47] For instance, elite theorists Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler (2014, ch. 13) view civil rights movements as part of a process of "diversifying the elite." Faced with a civil rights protest, elites can either *accommodate* – "coopting them through programs that bring protest leaders into the system" – or limit the protests through *repression*.

[48] By contrast, in a "spin dictatorship," the ruling party benefits from having a large (though not unanimous) margin of electoral victory, as this demoralizes the opposition (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, pp. 122–3).

was extended to the working class – starting with propertyless white men in the 1830s – the elite have had to devise methods for 'managing' the system of electoral politics to minimize the threat to elite interests." Focusing on election administration, James (2012) distinguishes between reforms that expand voter turnout (typically advocated by left-wing parties) and those that restrict voter turnout (typically sought by right-wing parties). For example, investigative journalist Greg Palast has documented Republican Party efforts to disenfranchise Democratic Party voters through voter roll purges in 2020[49] and the Interstate Cross-Check system prior to that.[50] Conversely, a 'Consortium of Behavioral Scientists' helped ensure Obama's 2008 presidential election win by harnessing behaviors such as herd instinct to increase voter turnout.[51]

In the political science literature, voter (de)mobilization efforts are usually viewed through a pluralist lens as attempts by specific candidates or parties to win an election rather than as part of a broader bipartisan elite effort to coopt latent revolutionary threats on either the left or right wing of the political spectrum, as this chapter's elite-class theory contends.[52] To clarify the distinction, it may be useful to distinguish between *sophisticated conservatism* (tacit bipartisan elite efforts to maintain systemic legitimacy) and *partisan conservatism* (partisan Republican efforts to maximize their own party's vote share). While both types of conservatism serve the interests of the upper classes, they do so in fundamentally different ways.

In the USA, to maintain the pluralist appearance of partisan differences, the two major parties take on different roles. On the one hand, the Republicans have become the party of relentless partisan conservatism and the motor of wealth accumulation. For instance, Hacker and Pierson (2020, p. 3) describe the Republican Party as "advancing the priorities of the plutocrats." To that end, they seek (among other things) to disenfranchise lower-class voters so as to maximize the right-wing's seat share. Meanwhile, the Democrats tend to be the party of sophisticated conservatism, "applying the breaks" on wealth accumulation (e.g., by expanding access to the ballot) as necessary to maintain the stability of democratic capitalism. Like Democrats, Republicans can also offer policy concessions to the lower classes ("role

[49] Palast, G. (2020, December 7). *Black Voters Matter Sues Georgia for Purging 200,000 Voters Ahead of 2020 Election*. Greg Palast Investigative Journalism. https://www.gregpalast.com/black-voters-matter-sues-georgia-for-purging-200000-voters-ahead-of-2020-election/

[50] Palast, G. (2019, April 3). *Interstate Crosscheck on the Verge of Collapse: Key States Withdraw from the Program*. Greg Palast Investigative Journalism. https://www.gregpalast.com/interstate-crosscheck-on-the-verge-of-collapse/

[51] Grunwald, M. (2009, April 2). *How Obama is Using the Science of Change*. Time. https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,1889153,00.html

[52] For instance, I would describe James' (2012) perspective, as presented in *Elite Statecraft and Election Administration*, as a pluralist-elite hybrid theory. On the one hand, his perspective is elitist in that he sees political elites holding on to power by manipulating electoral administration rules in a top-down fashion. On the other hand, he accepts the pluralist assumption that, in so doing, party leaders are primarily motivated by their own self-interest in holding onto public office.

switching"), but this is suboptimal from an elite perspective as it undermines the pluralist image of partisan polarization and genuine electoral choice.[53]

The Mass Media

A second channel through which elites can potentially influence public opinion (including about electoral candidates) is through the mass media. It is argued that while spin dictators "manipulate the media to ensure [their own party's] popularity and electoral victories" (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, p. 134), media conglomerates in unequal democracies have the capacity to promote whichever party is needed to coopt the masses. This is plausible because "The major mass media corporations are owned by members of the capitalist elite and numerous alternative Internet-based sites have elite financing as well" (Wetzel, 2022, p. 100).

Views differ on whether the media is capable of shaping public opinion. On the one hand, Domhoff (2006) argues that the mass media does not play a prominent role in maintaining corporate dominance in the USA. On the other hand, according to Jacobs and Shapiro (2000, p. 63), "Although Americans' preferences cannot be willfully manufactured by political actors, the public's heavy (though not exclusive) reliance on the media for information makes them vulnerable to subtle processes of influence." Thus, for instance, "The press can blunt or help policy advocates mobilize public support through its decision over what to cover and how to report it" (ibid, p. 56). Although public opinion is not easily changed by the media, "opinion change, when it does occur, is likely to swing in the direction favored by media reporting" (Schubert et al., 2014, p. 122).

Wetzel (2022, p. 235) observes that "[candidates'] chances of re-election depend on how favorable [those candidates] are viewed in the corporate media." According to Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler (2014, p. 107), through the mass media, political campaigns amount to "organized advertising campaigns in which the product being sold is a candidate or public policy." Furthermore, "News makers select the 'serious' candidates for coverage at the beginning of a race," such as Barack Obama, a "little-known state politician in Illinois who caught the media spotlight in 2004" (p. 118). Subsequently, some argued that the corporate media helped Donald Trump's campaign in 2016 by granting him disproportionate airtime.[54] Democrats

[53] By contrast, during the first wave of democratization and socialist uprisings (in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), conservative politicians were the main concession granters. At that time, one solution to the "conservative dilemma" (i.e., how to maintain popular support while serving the wealthy) was to address the material needs of the newly enfranchised, and "[m]ost conservative parties took at least halting steps in this direction" (Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 22).

[54] From a pluralist perspective, this media support for Trump's 2016 campaign can be attributed simply to the media company's desire to maximize viewers and make money for the corporation. From the elite theoretic perspective described here, by contrast, the media's overwhelming support for Trump was part of an unspoken elite response to the increasingly threatening populist right-wing in the context of the Obama administration – to stabilize the system, those groups had to be

were also critical of FBI Director James Comey's investigation into Hillary Clinton's emails (and this story's attention in the media) shortly before the 2016 election.[55]

Campaign Contributions

A third channel through which elites might influence election outcomes is with campaign contributions. For instance, Hacker and Pierson (2020, p. 143) describe an "invisible primary" in which "big donors, prominent officials, leaders of aligned groups – decide which candidate to back, and the money and endorsements start flowing in even before the first primary vote." This has become increasingly plausible in recent decades amidst skyrocketing campaign spending levels. From 1990 to 2008, "Campaign spending by the banking, insurance, and real estate industries, increased by eight times – to half a billion dollars" (Wetzel, 2022, p. 121). Since the US Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010), the amount of "money in politics" has continued to grow and has now reached extremely high levels.[56]

This context of high campaign spending levels suggests that elites may be able to sway an election outcome through campaign funding and/or mainstream media advertisements. For example, hedge fund manager George Soros and other wealthy liberals have made large donations to progressive candidates supporting criminal justice reform, such as Larry Krasner, who was elected as Philadelphia's District Attorney in 2017. According to socialist writer Tim Horras, this is because wealthy elites recognize that mass incarceration is not sustainable.[57]

Finally, it should be noted that electoral concessions in an unequal democracy are likely to be achieved via subtle means of influencing voter preference rather than through more brazen forms of vote rigging or fraud (which risk undermining democratic legitimacy). As just discussed, such subtle means of swaying election outcomes include election administration reforms ([de]mobilizing voters), the selection of news stories that gain traction in the media, or the distribution of campaign contributions. In what follows, I will briefly examine how these mechanisms may have been applied during the 2020 presidential election contest between Joe Biden and Donald Trump.

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coopted by selecting Trump, a relatively extreme Republican candidate (and potent symbolic concession).

[55] Frizell, S. (2016, October 26). *FBI Director James Comey Under Fire After Hillary Clinton Email Investigation Announcement*. Time. https://time.com/4550453/hillary-clinton-james-comey-fbi-emails/

[56] Goodwin, J. (2021, April 13). *The Influence of Money in Politics: Why it Must End Now*. Grow ensemble. https://growensemble.com/influence-of-money-in-politics/

[57] Horras, T. (2018, May 15). *"Wild, Unprecedented" Reformism: The Case of Larry Krasner*. Black Rose Federation. https://blackrosefed.org/reformism-larry-krasner/

Elite Influence in the 2020 Presidential Election

The 2016 Versus the 2020 Election

During the 2016 election, elites seemed to favor Trump's election in certain ways (e.g., the disproportionate airtime provided by the major media). Hacker and Pierson (2020) observe that Trump was initially an outsider during the 2016 campaign, but that elites and Republican-aligned business interests eventually came around to support him. In contrast to the 2016 election, many elites seemed to turn against Trump in 2020, consistent with the assertion that elites ultimately value systemic stability over Republican (or Democratic) Party victories and perhaps even over their own business interests. For instance, Hacker and Pierson (2020, pp. 222–3) describe how conservative elites and business groups (such as the Chamber of Commerce) distanced themselves from Trump as his defeat appeared increasingly likely. Here too, we can evaluate potential elite influence through the three aforementioned channels of electoral influence, beginning with voter (de)mobilization.

Voter (De)mobilization

According to the Pew Research Center, 66% of US adult citizens cast ballots in 2020, an increase of 7 percentage points over 2016. While both Trump and Biden gained support among different demographic groups in 2020, the overall increase in voter turnout favored Biden, who won with a 306-232 vote in the Electoral College and a 4-point margin of victory in the popular vote.[58] Trump claimed that fraudulent votes were used to help Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Joe Biden in 2020. However, Trump and his supporters have not provided any convincing evidence of this, to my knowledge. The pro-Trump movie *2000 Mules* (which I watched) claimed to present evidence that Biden stole the 2020 election. However, the biggest weakness in the film's argument, in my view, is that it seems to exaggerate the lack of control county-level Supervisors of Elections have over absentee ballots. If there was elite influence over the 2020 election outcome, it doesn't appear to have been through fraudulent means.

A more plausible source of elite influence was the funding of get-out-the-vote efforts favoring Biden. One report, published at *The New York Post*, found that Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg spent an unprecedented amount – over $400 million – on funding local government election offices (via non-profit organizations), primarily in Democratic-leaning districts of key swing states such as Georgia and Arizona, significantly increasing Biden's vote margin.[59] (An *Associated Press* report

[58] Igielnik, R., Keeter, S., & Hartig, H. (2021, June 30). *Behind Biden's 2020 Victory*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/06/30/behind-bidens-2020-victory/

[59] Doyle, W. (2021, October 13). *Mark Zuckerberg spent $419M on nonprofits ahead of 2020 election – and got out the Dem vote*. New York Post. https://nypost.com/2021/10/13/mark-zuckerberg-spent-419m-on-nonprofits-ahead-of-2020-election-and-got-out-the-dem-vote/

counter-argued that the funds were not used in a partisan manner.[60]) According to another report from the *Capital Research Center*, an "$800M dark money network helped anonymous donors pour a record amount of money into voter registration groups focused on increasing the Democratic Party turnout ahead of the 2020 election […] a dramatic rise over previous figures."[61] While such reports do not provide conclusive evidence of elite influence in 2020, it is suggestive of the types of channels that might have been used for such ends.

The Mass Media

Did the mass media influence the outcome of the 2020 presidential election? One can point to a few instances that are suggestive, although perhaps not conclusive, evidence of an elite bias against the Trump campaign. For instance, although it is not directly related to the mass media, Trump accused Pfizer Inc. of waiting to announce their COVID-19 vaccine until after the November 2020 election, although that was denied by Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla.[62] More directly related to the media, journalist and political analyst Chris Hedges mentioned on the Jimmy Dore show that *The New York Post* was blocked from its own Twitter account after publishing revelations about Joe Biden that were unfavorable to his campaign.[63] According to Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist Glenn Greenwald, major US media outlets, Silicon Valley social media giants, and the CIA dismissed an investigation into potential wrongdoing by Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden as part of an "overarching goal" of defeating President Trump.[64]

Campaign Contributions

Other evidence that elites turned against Trump (and the Republicans) in 2020 concerns campaign support from large businesses and associations. For instance, the Chamber of Commerce, one of the largest business associations in the USA, surprisingly endorsed a roughly even number of Democratic and Republican House

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[60] Kelety, J. (2022, May 3). *Posts misrepresent Mark Zuckerberg's election spending*. AP News. https://apnews.com/article/fact-checking-mark-zuckerberg-election-donations-188810437774

[61] Ludwig, H. (2021, February 5). *Megadonors Pour Record Amount of Money into "Get Out the Vote" Effort for Dems*. Capital Research Center. https://capitalresearch.org/article/megadonors-pour-record-amount-of-money-into-get-out-the-vote-effort-for-dems/

[62] Bicks, E. (2020, November 10). *Fact Check: Did Pfizer Purposely Wait to Announce Covid-19 Vaccine?* Heavy. https://heavy.com/news/did-pfizer-wait-covid19-vaccine-true-false/

[63] The Jimmy Dore Show. (2021, January 14). *America has the Tinder to IGNITE Social Uprising – Chris Hedges* [Video; 4:30–4:40]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olBU619Dlsc

[64] Golding, B. (2020, December 10). *Greenwald: Post's Hunter Biden reports "suppressed" from public by media*. New York Post. https://nypost.com/2020/12/10/greenwald-posts-hunter-biden-reports-suppressed-by-media/

candidates in the lead-up to the elections.[65] Also, some Wall Street leaders breathed a sigh of relief after Joe Biden picked Kamala Harris (a moderate) as his running mate, as this was viewed as more conducive to economic stability.[66] In addition, many large corporations withdrew financial support for congressional Republicans who voted against certifying the 2020 election.[67] And, after the January 6, 2021, Capitol Hill Riot (where Trump supporters sought to overturn Biden's victory), two influential business associations – the National Association of Manufacturers and the Business Roundtable – condemned the acts.[68] Noam Chomsky summed up the corporate response to the Capital Hill Riot as follows:

> [Trump's] entire legislative program was designed to pour money into the pockets of the super-rich, benefit corporations, and eliminate regulations that protect people but interfere with profits. As long as he was doing that, they were willing to tolerate him. But January 6 was too much. And almost instantly, the major centers of economic power – the Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, major corporate executives – moved very quickly and told Trump straight out, this is enough: get lost.[69]

Such developments are consistent with the view that, in an unequal democracy, political and economic elites, despite their outward appearance of partisan posturing and division, are ultimately more concerned with maintaining the stability of democratic capitalism than they are with seeing one party or the other win an election. And maintaining the legitimacy (and thus stability) of democratic capitalism requires oscillations in power between partisan elites to coopt latent revolutionary threats.[70]

In the buildup to the 2020 election, left-wing opposition to Trump and the Republicans (including movements such as Black Lives Matter) was becoming an increasing latent revolutionary threat, such that it was time to swing back to Democratic Party control. Although Trump's supporters clearly posed a greater

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[65] Fram, A. (2020, September 1). *Chamber of Commerce backs freshman House Dems, marking shift*. AP News. https://apnews.com/article/senate-elections-politics-business-16f74b9d0bb3f1a6eb84891280672e95

[66] Schwartz, B. (2020, August 11). *Wall Street executives are glad Joe Biden picked Kamala Harris to be his VP running mate*. CNBC. https://www.cnbc.com/2020/08/11/joe-biden-vp-pick-wall-street-executives-are-happy-about-kamala-harris.html

[67] Leonhardt, D. (2021, January 12). *A Corporate Backlash*. New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/12/briefing/trump-mob-impeachment-gorillas-san-diego-zoo.html

[68] Novet, J. (2021, January 6). *U.S. trade group asks VP Pence to "seriously consider" invoking 25th Amendment to remove Trump*. CNBC. https://www.cnbc.com/2021/01/06/national-association-of-manufacturers-calls-dc-protests-sedition.html

[69] Chomsky, N., & Barsamian, D. (2021, April 8). *Marx's Old Mole is Right Beneath the Surface*. Boston Review. https://bostonreview.net/class-inequality-politics/noam-chomsky-david-barsamian-mole

[70] Similar to major party leaders in an unequal democracy, spin dictators are primarily interested in maintaining the regime and tend to "have no official doctrine" (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, p. 75). However, as was previously noted, a key difference is that while unequal democracies promote peaceful transitions in power between government and opposition parties, spin dictators cannot allow opposition parties to win and thus lack the stability and legitimacy of unequal democratic regimes.

systemic threat (given the Capital Hill riots), coopting them in 2020 would have required overturning Biden's victory, defeating the purpose of cooptation (i.e., democratic stability).[71] While it is difficult to say whether elite influence is decisive, elites clearly have the capacity to influence electoral outcomes and a shared interest in using it to maintain stability.

Policy Concessions

The Substantive Dimension of Policy Concessions

Issue Area and Concession Generosity

In contrast to electoral concessions (determining which party's leaders are in office), policy concessions involve actual legislative (or other types of policy) outcomes. Policy concessions vary along substantive and procedural dimensions. The substantive dimension of policy concessions concerns the issue area being reformed, the generosity of the concession, and the characteristics of the legislative division generated by the issue. Policy concessions (i.e., popular policy) can focus on a variety of issue areas such as the minimum wage, tax policy, environmental protections, health care, gay rights, immigration, police conduct, and so on.

For example, following the mass protests against the police killing of George Floyd in May of 2020, the Democratic Party introduced the Justice in Policing bill, which proposed a number of reforms such as a national police misconduct registry, banning police chokeholds, restricting the transfer of military-grade equipment to police departments, and making lynching a federal hate crime.[72] Even President Trump, after 2 weeks of Black Lives Matter protests, issued an executive order to create a database to track police misconduct and to encourage the use of social and mental health workers instead of police where appropriate.[73] A number of policing reforms were also enacted at the local level within that context.[74]

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[71] A plausible conjecture is that the Trump presidency – from the 2016 election to his (probably feigned) attempt to overturn the 2020 election – was a concession to the far-right, which had become increasingly threatening to the democratic order during the Obama presidency. From that perspective, Trump was a pseudo-populist, part of the longer-term bipartisan elites' balancing act, intended to contain rather than propel right-wing revolutionary momentum.

[72] Caldwell, L. A., & Shabad, R. (2020, June 8). *Congressional Democrats unveil sweeping police reform bill that would ban chokeholds, no-knock warrants in drug cases*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/pelosi-top-democrats-unveil-police-reform-bill-n1227376

[73] Kelly, A. (2020, June 16). *Trump, Hailing Law Enforcement, Signs Executive Order Calling for Police Reform*. WRVO public media. https://www.wrvo.org/post/watch-live-trump-sign-executive-order-police-reform

[74] Democracy Now. (2020, June 16). *Cities and States Adopt New Police Rules Amid Mass Uprising*. https://www.democracynow.org/2020/6/16/headlines/cities_and_states_adopt_new_police_rules_amid_mass_uprising

Concessionary policies also vary in the generosity of the change brought about, from minor to major reforms.[75] For example, policy concessions on health care can amount to a moderately progressive change (e.g., the Affordable Care Act) or a more radical change (e.g., a public insurance option or even a single-payer system). Social Security and the New Deal are examples of major concessions. As Domhoff (2006, p. 181) explains: "The main ideas for Social Security came from the employees of Industrial Relations Counselors, Inc., founded in 1921 by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to search for ways to deal with labor unrest and avoid unionization." Domhoff describes this as Social Security's "conservative origins" (p. 184). Also, according to Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler (2014, p. 59), "The New Deal was not new or extreme but rather a necessary reform of the existing capitalist system […] Relief, recovery, and reform – and preventing revolution – were the objectives of the New Deal."[76] Generous concessions also include institutional changes, such as suffrage expansion, as such reforms are longer-lasting and thus signal a more credible elite commitment (Przeworski, 2019, p. 14).

Division Characteristics: Outcomes in the "Ideologically Expected" Direction

When concessions are granted, it is optimal, from an elite perspective, for the "ideologically expected" party to do so. Thus, it is optimal for Republicans to grant concessions on, say, tax relief (as they are viewed as the party of small government), while Democrats grant concessions on, say, social welfare (as they are viewed as more left-leaning). This is optimal for two reasons. First, partisan divisions – where the parties vote against each other as cohesive blocs in the ideologically expected direction – reinforce the pluralist image of democratic electoral choice and thus help to maintain systemic legitimacy. Second, partisan divisions among representatives reinforce partisan divisions at the mass level, thereby making it less likely that a broad-based, nonpartisan revolutionary coalition will form.[77]

Of course, this elite theoretic argument – that policy concessions will tend to come from the "ideologically expected" party – is confounded by the more conventional pluralist explanation that rather than a form of cooptation such policy

[75] Although my focus here is on reforms advanced by elected representatives, cooptation can also be advanced by private foundations and corporations, as was seen in the upper-class response to the civil rights uprisings in the late 1960s as well as more recently in response to the George Floyd protests. Lyons, M. N. (2020, June 23). *Cooptation as ruling class strategy*. Three Way Fight Blog. https://threewayfight.blogspot.com/2020/06/cooptation-as-ruling-class-strategy.html

[76] The major New Deal legislation was passed during an unprecedented period of working class solidary, and insurgency, including "hundreds of thousands of workers forming unions from scratch, huge waves of strikes, plant seizures, and city-wide general strikes" (Wetzel, 2022, p. 66).

[77] Consistent with this idea that polarization is a top-down phenomenon, Achen and Bartels (2016, Fig. 2.1) provide evidence that political elites are more polarized than the masses in the US. However, given US political parties' "bottom-up" structure (i.e., reliance on party primaries for candidate selection), polarization may be driven more by interest groups than party elites per se (Taylor et al., 2014, pp. 184–9; see also Hacker & Pierson, 2020).

outcomes simply demonstrate party leaders' responsiveness to their constituents' preferences. In that sense, as was mentioned previously, pluralism has the advantage of Occam's Razor. In the next chapter, I will review outcomes in the "ideologically *un*expected" direction, which pluralist theories have a harder time explaining.[78] Next, I will briefly introduce the idea as part of substantive policy concessions.

Outcomes in the "Unexpected Direction": Independence of Electoral and Policy Concessions

Contrary to the outward appearance of partisan polarization (emphasized by pluralist theories[79]), the elite cooptation model stresses an independence of electoral and policy concessions, where leaders from either party (or branch of government) may grant policy concessions to left- or right-wing populist movements as needed to prevent latent revolutionary threats from escalating into actual ones. As Tim Horras observes, "reforms and concessions are not dependent upon the ideological beliefs or partisan identification of elected officeholders. Policy victories are the product of class struggle, when the mobilization of masses of people creates a threat (or the possibility of a threat) to class rule."[80]

An example illustrating the willingness of both parties to offer concessions is found in West Virginia, where, under pressure from a teacher strike held on February 29, 2019, the Republican-led House voted 53-45 to "indefinitely postpone" a pro-privatization bill the teachers were opposing.[81] As an earlier example, drastic actions to alleviate unemployment, such as the public works programs of the Emergency Relief and Construction Act, began with president Herbert Hoover, a Republican (Schubert et al., 2014, p. 59). Also, The Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed with overwhelming support from both Democratic and Republican Party representatives (ibid, p. 321). In the next chapter, I will provide a fuller account of policy outcomes in expected and unexpected directions.

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[78] As Hacker and Pierson (2020, p. 150) observe, "As political scientists, we were trained to see [support for unpopular legislation] as unicorns. Politicians just aren't supposed to act […] in such blatant opposition to the clearly expressed views of voters."

[79] The appearance of partisan division can be reinforced in a variety of ways: partisan legislative roll call votes; inflammatory partisan rhetoric expressed by candidates, elected representatives, or other prominent figures in the mass media; vigilante attacks against members of the opposite party; as well as intellectuals adhering to pluralist theoretic frameworks. Today, there also appears to be a sort of tacit cooperation at the mass level, with Republicans vilifying even moderate Democratic Party leaders (such as Joe Biden) and, in defiance of those critics, Democrats defending their party leaders while withholding any criticism of them.

[80] Horras, T. (2018, May 15). *"Wild, Unprecedented" Reformism: The Case of Larry Krasner*. Black Rose Federation. https://blackrosefed.org/reformism-larry-krasner/

[81] Campbell, A. (2019, February 19). *West Virginia teachers are on strike again. Here's why*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/2019/2/19/18231486/west-virginia-teacher-strike-2019

The Procedural Dimension of Policy Concessions

Policy Advancement

I have just discussed the substantive dimension of policy concessions, including issue area, concession generosity, and division characteristics. The second dimension is *procedural* and can itself be broken down into two types: the extent of policy advancement and the margins of victory. First, policy concessions vary in the extent to which they are allowed to advance through the policy-making process. The extent of policy advancement ranges from mere lip service to the introduction of legislation, to its advancement through the legislative process, and further along into the passage, implementation, and policy enforcement stages.[82] To this, we might also add the survival or defeat of a policy facing legal challenges, as well as attempts to amend, overturn, or replace the law (Schubert et al., 2014, pp. 275–7). The further popular policy is allowed to advance along this path, the more generous is its concessionary value (even if the popular outcome is eventually defeated), as the policy-making process will appear more responsive to popular demands. Also important is timing, with earlier concessions more effective at "decompressing revolutionary mobilization" (Lawson, 2019, p. 56).

Margins of Victory

A second procedural dimension of policy concessions concerns the margin of victory realized in vote outcomes along the aforementioned path of policy advancement. One can further distinguish between one-shot and dynamic margins of victory. *One-shot* margins of victory refer to the seat share of a legislative majority on a particular vote in a particular chamber. For example, in July 2017, the US Senate narrowly approved with 51 votes (including Vice President Mike Pence's tie-breaking vote) a motion to advance overturning Obamacare.[83] Another razor-thin margin of victory occurred during the final vote on the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act, during which "The House leadership took the unusual step of leaving the vote count open for several hours while furiously lobbying a handful of legislators to change their votes. The measure passed by a one-vote margin with a small number of Democratic votes" (Adolino & Blake, 2011, p. 248). A wider margin occurred

[82] As an example of lip service, although President Biden announced that his administration was ending US support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen in February 2021, the US continued to provide service to Saudi aircraft used to carry out the bombings. Ward, A. (2021, April 27). *The US may still be helping Saudi Arabia in the Yemen war after all*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/2021/4/27/22403579/biden-saudi-yemen-war-pentagon. As another example, Robert Reich (2015, p. 131) recounts that "A succession of Democratic presidents promised legislation streamlining the process for forming unions and increasing penalties on employers who violated the law, but nothing came of these promises."

[83] Kaplan, T., & Pear, R. (2017, July 25). *Senate Votes Down Broad Obamacare Repeal*. New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/25/us/politics/senate-health-care.html

with the Senate resolution introduced in early 2018 by Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Chris Murphy (D-CT), and Mike Lee (R-UT) to end US support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen, which was defeated by a vote of 55-44 (67 votes were needed for approval).[84]

By contrast, the *dynamic* margin of victory concerns the number of victories and losses a legislative bill (or other type of policy reform) accumulates over the course of its journey through the policy-making process. A bill that is approved successively by all three branches of government, for instance, has a wider dynamic margin of victory than a bill that is blocked in one of those branches but eventually becomes law nonetheless. For example, the Keystone XL oil pipeline was defeated with a narrow dynamic margin of victory (i.e., a victory for opponents of the pipeline): The Obama Administration halted the project before leaving office, but the project was later revived under the Trump Administration in 2017.[85] A bit later, Joe Biden cancelled the pipeline after coming to office in January of 2021[86], and TC Energy finally cancelled the project in June of 2021.[87]

In Sum: Contrasting Explanations of Electoral and Policy Outcomes

Conventional pluralist theory suggests that peaceful alternations in power between political parties are indicative of a well-functioning democracy in which the people hold their elected officials accountable and exercise democratic choice through free and fair elections. From a pluralist-theoretic perspective, this electoral connection between voters and their representatives ensures that political divisions over public policy found at the mass level are reflected at the legislative and executive levels. Meanwhile, policy advancement and narrow margins of victory are signs of a healthy democratic process wherein interest groups and parties on different sides of essentially contested issues compete over potential outcomes in the public interest.

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[84] Emmons, A. (2018, September 26). *House Resolution Directs Trump to End U.S. Support for Yemen War*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2018/09/26/yemen-us-military-house-resolution/

[85] Despite the outward pluralist appearance of differences between the Democratic and Republican Party administrations on this issue, the elite theoretic perspective views the administrations as sharing a tacit consensus in favor of completing the Keystone XL pipeline and its eventual defeat as a concession in response to pressures from mass-level opposition to the pipeline. In that case, the policy cost of allowing the pipeline to be defeated was outweighed by the expected electoral and legitimacy costs of allowing the pipeline to be completed.

[86] Pladson, K. (2021, January 21). *With a pen stroke, President Joe Biden cancels Keystone XL pipeline project*. DW News. https://www.dw.com/en/with-a-pen-stroke-president-joe-biden-cancels-keystone-xl-pipeline-project/a-56285371

[87] Democracy Now. (2021, June 10). *TC Energy cancels Keystone XL Pipeline as Water Defenders Continue to fight Enbridge Line 3*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/6/10/headlines/tc_energy_cancels_keystone_xl_pipeline_as_water_defenders_continue_to_fight_enbridge_line_3

The elite cooptation model, by contrast, argues that, in an unequal democracy, the major parties will tend to serve the interests of elite and/or upper-class groups as opposed to average citizens and that, therefore, we lack genuine electoral choice. Elite-influenced oscillations in power between major parties channel popular opposition toward the incumbent party and away from deeper systemic issues. As Richard Wolff explains, "The policies of one party proceed until they so aggravate the country that demands for 'change' arise. That demand is met by moving to the other party and its policies. System criticism and system change stay out of politics."[88] In a similar vein, Rob Urie observes that, "Elections are intended to change the cast of characters without challenging existing institutions."[89]

In an unequal democracy, elite-mass divisions ("legislative pay raise games") will be more common, and, given their solidary interest in maintaining systemic legitimacy, political elites are able to cooperate in achieving elite-preferred outcomes while maintaining democratic legitimacy ("sophisticated conservatism"). Electoral and policy concessions allow political elites to use state power in pursuit of their own interests while maintaining the appearance of democratic electoral choice. Where policy outcomes favor elites over the public, partisan division and narrow margins of defeat give the impression that the people's preferences, although not reflected in the final outcome, are well represented in the policy-making process.

5.5 Elite Cooptation Model: Bottom-Up Opposition

Tipping Model of Democratic Transition

Revolutionary Thresholds

The elite cooptation game involves an interaction between elites (top-down) and masses (bottom-up). Having discussed elite strategies, I turn now to the mass level. Bottom-up tipping models of revolutionary change consist of three main concepts: revolutionary thresholds, revolutionary cascades, and preference falsification. Each individual has their own revolutionary threshold, and each society has its own overall distribution of such thresholds. Someone's *revolutionary threshold* indicates how large an opposition movement must be before that individual is willing to join that movement (Granovetter, 1978; Kuran, 1991). As a revolutionary movement grows, participating in it becomes less risky, as it is less likely that any one individual will be persecuted by the state for their stance. Revolutionary thresholds are determined by two individual characteristics: a person's sincere political preference

[88] Wolff, R. (2018, Aug. 20). *Politics is Propping Up Our Capitalist System*. Truth Dig. https://www.truthdig.com/articles/american-politics-are-propping-up-our-capitalist-system/

[89] Urie, R. (2018, September 10). *Elections and the Illusion of Political Control*. Counter Punch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/09/10/elections-and-the-illusion-of-political-control/

(ranging from revolutionary to reactionary), and one's level of risk aversion (ranging from risk averse to risk taking).[90]

At the most general level, one's own political preferences are determined by both nature and nurture. As was discussed in Chap. 3, human nature is here viewed as normally distributed along a dimension ranging from the most virtuous and social individual to the most selfish and individualistic one. Those on the virtuous left side of the spectrum are more empathetic and thus pay a higher guilt cost for failing to oppose injustices carried out in their name. Meanwhile, those around the center of the spectrum pay a moderate guilt cost, which can be offset by moderate reformist efforts or occasional low-risk statement-making (sometimes called "virtue signaling"). Those on the selfish right side of the spectrum pay little or no guilt cost and are thus inclined to bandwagon with the powerful.[91]

Meanwhile, the effects of nurture on political preference can be roughly observed via a focus on socioeconomic status. In the long term, most Americans would gain from a successful social revolution, which would bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth, a more just legal system, fairer representation, an economic system conducive to quality of life and low stress, and a more fulfilling sense of collective purpose and shared community. However, such diffuse benefits are likely to be less desired by the middle and upper classes, who already benefit from the status quo, and more desired by those from a lower socioeconomic class, who stand to gain from such transformative changes.[92] Most can expect some blend of select (particular) and diffuse (shared) benefits from a successful revolution, sometimes called "linkage."[93]

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[90] Highlighting the independence of these two factors, Przeworski (1991, p. 68) observes that "Moderates and Radicals may but need not represent different interests. They may be distinguished only by risk aversion. Moderates may be those who fear [regime] hardliners, not necessarily those who have less radical goals."

[91] For instance, Wendy Brown (2019, pp. 169–70) refers to a right-wing interviewee who desired to be free from "the strictures of liberal philosophy and its rules of feeling." Those interviewees felt that they were being asked "to feel compassion for the downtrodden" when "they didn't really want to."

[92] In line with this economic interest-based argument, according to the Meltzer-Richards model, because the average voter (on the left-right ideological dimension) tends to be from a lower income bracket (given the positively skewed distribution of wealth), democratic majority rule should lead to a downward wealth redistribution (see Clark et al., 2013, p. 772). However, evidence of public support for progressive wealth redistribution appears to be mixed. On the one hand, according to a Gallup poll from 2011, only 47% thought that "our government should redistribute wealth by heavy taxes on the rich." Saad, L. (2011, June 2). *Americans Divided on Taxing the Rich to Redistribute Wealth*. Gallup. https://news.gallup.com/poll/147881/americans-divided-taxing-rich-redistribute-wealth.aspx. On the other hand, Piston (2018) provides evidence that support for downward wealth redistribution crosses partisan, ideological, and even class lines.

[93] As an example of linkage (where action for the public good is incentivized by private interest), from my own experience, I would benefit from a revolution that succeeded in abolishing the secret police. This particular benefit, in addition to the virtues associated with social revolution, has probably contributed to my motivation to write this book. This shows that particular interests in revolution can be a force for good. However, most will probably lack a strong incentive to promote revolution, drawing our attention to the importance of diffuse benefits. Even in the case of radical

Another determinant of revolutionary thresholds is one's level of risk aversion. Despite the longer-term diffuse benefits of revolution, revolutionary strategy is often viewed as a risky endeavor for the individual in the near term. For example, in a 2014 op-ed, Robert Reich suggested that the American people have not revolted, despite the high levels of socioeconomic inequality, because "the working class is paralyzed with fear it will lose the jobs and wages it has," and because students are afraid of defaulting on their debt.[94] The affluent might also be more risk-averse when it comes to political activism, ceteris paribus, as they have more to lose.[95] Generally speaking, risk-averse individuals will have a higher revolutionary threshold and will tend toward reformism (even if they sincerely prefer radical change). By contrast, risk-taking individuals (who prefer radical change) will make their revolutionary preference known even without a large movement underway.[96]

Preference Falsification

Another key concept in bottom-up tipping models of revolutionary change is preference falsification. *Preference falsification* occurs when an individual hides his or her true preference for radical change, outwardly feigning support for the prevailing political order instead to avoid the costs associated with making radical statements publicly (especially state persecution). Preference falsification is determined by one's political preferences and level of risk aversion, and is also determined by the political regime type under which they reside. Generally speaking, preference falsification should be more severe in an autocracy, as will be explained below.

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reformist movements, many may be too preoccupied with their day-to-day affairs to take an interest. For example, during the early stages of the women's suffrage movement, "the masses of working women were far too concerned about their immediate problems – wages, hours, working conditions – to fight for a cause that seemed terribly abstract" (Davis, 1981, p. 140).

[94] Reich, R. (2014, January 27). *Why There's No Outcry for a Revolution in America*. Truth Dig. http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/why_theres_no_outcry_for_a_revolution_in_america_20140127

[95] An important nuance to this point is that, while the affluent may be more risk-averse (as they have more to lose), they also have a greater capacity to resist (i.e., access to resources) and may be harder to buy off than the poor (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, p. 23).

[96] As was discussed in Chap. 1, Fukuyama (1992, p. 180) argues that revolutionary action is driven both by people's *desire* for material goods (that is, rational choice) as well as by *thymos,* or the quest for recognition. As Fukuyama explains, "Revolutionary situations cannot occur unless at least some people are willing to risk their lives and their comfort for a cause. The courage to do so cannot arise out of the desiring [rational] part of the soul but must come from the thymotic [recognition-seeking] part." Thus, individuals with a stronger thymotic desire to be recognized as virtuous should be less risk-averse and have a lower revolutionary threshold overall.

Revolutionary Cascades

Also relevant to bottom-up tipping models is the concept of revolutionary cascades. Although "the conditions under which the opposition rises are difficult to satisfy" (Przeworski, 2019, p. 188), shocking events can setoff cascades of opposition. *Revolutionary cascades* ensue when an unexpected shock (event) alters the distribution of revolutionary thresholds, thereby knocking the system out of equilibrium (Granovetter, 1978; Kuran, 1991). Shocks that spark protest can come in different forms, including but not limited to elections (Lawson, 2019, p. 192). For example, the police killing of George Floyd in 2020 sparked one of the largest civil rights mobilizations in US history. During a cascade, "one person's participation triggers the participation of another, which triggers the participation of another, and so on" (Clark et al., 2013, p. 285). To illustrate the basic idea, consider first the following set of revolutionary thresholds in a hypothetical ten-person society labeled A.[97]

$$A = \{0,\ 2,\ 2,\ 3,\ 4,\ 5,\ 6,\ 7,\ 8,\ 10\}$$

The first individual has a revolutionary threshold of 0 and is thus willing to protest alone. The second and third individuals in this society have a revolutionary threshold of 2, meaning that they need two other individuals to be protesting before they are willing to join. The tenth individual has a revolutionary threshold of 10 and will thus never join the protest, as there can never be ten individuals already protesting without his participation. Thus, in society A, only the first individual will protest. Now consider that same society after an unexpected shock, which we will refer to as society A'.

$$A' = \{0,\ 1,\ 2,\ 3,\ 4,\ 5,\ 6,\ 7,\ 8,\ 10\}$$

Notice that the second individual's threshold dropped from 2 to 1. This apparently small change sets the stage for a revolutionary cascade, as the second individual is now willing to join the first, the third individual is now willing to join the first two, and so on. Eventually, even conservatives with higher thresholds will fear ending up on the losing side and will thus defect to the revolutionary camp. As Przeworski (1991, p. 64) explains, at the point of indifference near a conservative's revolutionary threshold, "jumping ship seems as good a way to save one's skin as shooting." Of course, whether a cascade ensues will depend on the particular distribution of thresholds across a given society.

[97] This illustration is adopted from Clark, Golder, and Golder (2013, p. 285).

Merging Top-Down and Bottom-Up Theories

Elite Cooptation Game in an Autocracy

In an autocratic regime, one can view a bargaining interaction between democratic opposition movements and political elites, resulting in either repression, cooptation (i.e., "liberalization"), or a full transition to liberal democracy. The two main factors determining the bargaining outcome are *opposition strategy* (commitment to either revolution or reform) and *information* (regarding the severity of the revolutionary threat) to guide the elite response. Unlike democracies, autocratic regimes rely more on repression than legitimacy to maintain order.[98] On the one hand, repression limits opposition by raising the cost of protest, making the regime appear quite stable.

On the other hand, repression increases preference falsification, which makes it harder for elites to assess the optimal generosity of concessions needed to stabilize the regime. This lack of information may help explain why revolutions are more common in autocracies and why they often appear unexpectedly.[99] As Haggard and Kaufman (2016, p. 64) explain, "[an authoritarian] regime that has relied extensively on repression is vulnerable to mass mobilization in the face of external shocks or changes of leadership." A classic example of a revolutionary cascade occurred with the fall of the Soviet Union, an event that caught many by surprise (Kuran, 1991). In that case, the shock was Gorbachev's *peristroika* and *glasnost* reforms, which, rather than shoring up regime legitimacy and stability, sparked a revolutionary cascade culminating in its demise.[100]

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[98] Even in autocratic countries, there is some combination of concessions and repression. For example, the social order in Egypt was "secured through a combination of state-led development and redistribution. However, under Sadat and Mubarak, this legitimacy was eroded as the state became constructed more through repression than by popular mandate" (Lawson, 2019, p. 209). Discussing a similar dimension, Haggard and Kaufman (2016, pp. 61–62) observe that authoritarian regimes rely more on repression, while competitive authoritarian ("hybrid") regimes rely more on cooptation. Similarly, according to Guriev and Treisman (2022), while the traditional "fear dictator" relied on publicly visible acts of repression, "spin dictators" rely more on the manipulation of public opinion to remain in power. For example, an innovator of spin dictatorship, Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, developed a model of "calibrated coercion," which aimed to minimize visible repression (ibid, p. 35). Spin dictatorships such as Putin's Russia, Lee's Singapore, and Orban's Hungary, can also achieve high levels of public support (ibid, pp. 12–13) although it is hard to gauge how much of that is falsified, even in a spin dictatorship.

[99] This point also requires some nuance, as many autocratic leaders also gather information about public opinion. As Guriev and Treisman (2022, p. 125) explain, "The power of spin dictators depends on their popularity. So they monitor it closely. Unlike old-school autocrats, who at most dabbled in sociology, the new ones pore over polling data." For example, each week, "Putin's Kremlin commissions broad-ranging, national surveys from two firms. It periodically adds regionally representative surveys and secret polls on particular topics" (ibid). However, such information may be more prone to preference falsification, making it less reliable than polling in a democracy.

[100] Solidarity unions in Poland provide a more specific example of a revolutionary cascade during the fall of the Soviet Union: "In hopes of defusing the movement, the regime initially recognized the Solidarity unions with the Gdansk Agreement, but this unleashed a flood. Within months, membership in Solidarity swelled to over ten million, and strikes and protests swept the country."

Elite Cooptation Game in an Unequal Democracy

Bargaining in unequal democracies can also be modeled as an interaction between democratic opposition movements and political elites, resulting in either repression, cooptation, or transition (in this case) to egalitarian democracy. Here too, the main factors determining the bargaining outcome are opposition strategy and information. With regards to the latter, elites can glean information from public opinion polling (Domhoff, 2006, p. 109), as well as protests, civic participation, and social media activity.[101] As Haggard and Kaufman (2016, p. 174) note, "Mass mobilization reveals information on the balance of power between state and civil society." Also relevant, political scientist V. O. Key explained in 1961 that public opinion in a democracy "establishes vague limits of permissiveness within which governmental action may occur without arousing a commotion" (quoted in Achen & Bartels, 2016, pp. 318–9). Some uncertainty always remains about the public's opinion regarding policies and elections, and representatives may become overconfident in their ability to shape public opinion (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000). Even so, information is even less clear in autocratic societies, where preference falsification is widespread due to the state's greater reliance on coercion.

Unlike autocracies, democratic regimes rely more on legitimacy than repression to maintain order (Price, 2020, p. 193). In democratic countries, political freedom minimizes the degree of preference falsification, and a clearer picture of public preference allows elites to accurately identify the issue area where concessions must be granted as well as the minimal generosity of such concessions needed to maintain order. In a similar vein, Walter Burnham (1982, pp. 154–5) observed that mass political participation provides "essential feedback mechanisms through which the rulers can gain legitimacy for themselves, their policies, and their rule." Of course, "outcomes of institutional interplay cannot be predicted exactly" (Przeworski, 2019, p. 157). Even in consolidated democracies such as the USA, risk-averse individuals fearing job loss or debt default may be reluctant to express a radical preference. Given such imperfect information, concessions granted might be insufficient (catalyzing opposition growth) or overestimated (unnecessarily weakening the regime).

But generally speaking, preference falsification should be more severe in an autocracy. Thus, revolutionary cascades should be limited, even in a highly unequal democracy such as the USA. Discussing the Occupy Wall Street movement, Micah White (2016, p. 126) observed that "Occupy spread because being part of the movement gave a sensation of fearlessness and the people believed our movement was worth the risk of arrest." Although we saw a quasi-cascade in the case of Occupy and following the police killing of George Floyd in May 2020, neither culminated

In the midst of the revolutionary transition, Solidarity also swept all the parliamentary seats it was permitted to contest (Haggard & Kaufman, 2016, pp. 117–8).

[101] As Lawson (2019, p. 217) explains, internet technologies (including social media) are a double-edged sword: they can help coordinate revolutionary protests, but they can also be used by the government to disrupt those same protests.

in the fall of the regime as sophisticated political elites were able to identify the optimal level of concession generosity, and because the activists were willing to settle for those reforms. As Lawson (2019, p. 228) puts it, "Democracy anaesthetizes revolution."

Revolutionary Movement Building in an Unequal Democracy

It follows from this discussion that advocates of revolutionary change in the USA should focus on ways to lower people's revolutionary thresholds. First, this can be achieved by lowering the near-term costs of revolutionary strategy by addressing people's material interests and/or rational concerns (especially those with more to lose). To that end, this chapter has discussed strategic interaction and collective action problems in an unequal democracy, and Chap. 8 will turn to the topic of revolutionary strategy within that context. Second, revolutionary thresholds can be lowered by emphasizing the longer-term diffuse benefits of revolutionary success via moral persuasion (the aim of Chap. 6) and stoking the thymotic desire for recognition (the goal of Chap. 7). An elite-theoretic understanding of US politics, coupled with a shared commitment to revolutionary strategy, will render elite cooptation strategies less effective, magnifying the latent power of revolutionary cascades that might emerge in the aftermath of unexpected shocks. And, as Peter Kropotkin (2015 [1892], p. 210) explained in *The Conquest of Bread*: "Before such an irresistible force 'conspiring kings' will be powerless. Nothing will remain for them but to bow before it, and to harness themselves to the chariot of humanity, rolling towards new horizons opened up by the social revolution."

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I've reviewed the major contrasts between pluralist and elite theories and presented an elite-class theoretic perspective on US politics. That perspective, the elite cooptation model, emphasizes an elite-mass bargaining interaction composed of top-down elite concessions and bottom-up strategies at the mass level. In the context of an unequal liberal democracy, policymaking can be generally understood as an ongoing effort by political elites to balance between, on the one hand, serving the interests of the upper classes, and, on the other hand, providing concessions to the masses sufficiently generous to maintain systemic legitimacy. In a similar vein, Michael Parenti (2011, p. 277) writes, "bourgeois democracy plays the contradictory roles of *protector of capital* and *servant of the people*. By employing a seemingly benign legitimate power, it more effectively marshals popular support and maintains a privileged status quo." This understanding of US politics is distinct from the pluralist-theoretic perspectives that, despite the high levels of socioeconomic inequality, continue to predominate within the field of political science and mainstream political analysis, and is reflected in the general public's contractarian

understanding of US government and politics. Thus, the elite theoretic perspective presented in this chapter promotes an alternative understanding of US politics within the field of political science and provides a theoretical foundation for the remaining chapters of Part II. In the next chapter, I turn to the current political landscape in the USA.

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Chapter 6
The Political Landscape



6.1 Introduction

As has been mentioned, Part II of this book focuses on social revolution, primarily within the USA. Why focus on the USA? I will here emphasize two interrelated reasons. First, the USA has been the leading superpower since the end of World War II, and the most powerful nation-state since the fall of the Soviet Union.[1] Second, the USA has been the leading vanguard state behind and, in some ways, enforcer of the neoliberal order, which arose in the 1970s and gained momentum in the 1980s.[2] Thus, a successful social revolution within the USA would presumably create more

[1] The Cold War era (1945–1990) might be described as a period of asymmetric bipolarity as the Soviet Union never reached the level of economic wealth or military power achieved by the USA (Chomsky, 1991). For instance, the Soviet Union's economic growth peaked in 1970 at about 57% of US gross national product (Nau, 2019, p. 183). Some describe the post-Cold War period as a "unipolar moment" under US hegemony (ibid, p. 217). Similarly, Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler (2014, p. 364) observed that "The United States is preeminent in both economic and military power: it is the global hegemon." Also, according to Wolin (2008, p. 191), "The U.S. empire is *the* Superpower, unrivaled." Mearsheimer (2014) describes the USA as a *regional* hegemon (with control over the western hemisphere) and an offshore balancer in other parts of the world (aiming to prevent the rise of a peer competitor). However, Mearsheimer argues that the US-led liberal order began to wane after 2005, and that we are now headed toward a bipolar order with the rise of China.

[2] Neoliberalism, according to Wendy Brown (2019, p. 18), "is most commonly associated with a bundle of policies privatizing ownership and services, radically reducing the social state, leashing labor, deregulating capital, and producing a tax-and-tariff-friendly climate to direct foreign investors." Since the 1970s, neoliberal globalization has pressured western governments to adopt more flexible labor market policies (increasing the number of jobs people hold throughout their lives) and undermined the neo-corporatist bargaining strength of labor unions, which thrived, to varying degrees, in early post-World War II decades. The USA has enforced neoliberal capitalism, for instance, by targeting countries who pursue socialist alternatives such as Venezuela or Cuba (for more examples, see the "post-imperialism" part of Chap. 7).

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space for transformative changes in other nations currently constrained by the competitive pressures of global capitalism and US interventionism.

A constellation of factors sets the stage for a successful revolutionary movement in the USA today: the timeliness of a new US Constitution (see Chap. 7), a policy landscape characterized by severe inequality and numerous deeply rooted policy problems (reviewed below), an inability to adequately resolve these issues via political reformism (argued in this chapter and Chap. 8), the current critical juncture in world politics (see Chap. 1), and signs of growing demand for systemic change among the American public.[3] Still, building revolutionary momentum is challenging, in part because, to my knowledge, a clear and comprehensive argument for social revolution has not been presented yet (something I hope to achieve with this book).[4]

This chapter has two main objectives. First, it aims to show that the current policy landscape is morally problematic (from behind a Rawlsian veil of ignorance[5]) and thus demands radical reforms. This is demonstrated via a review of major policy problems in the domestic and foreign policy domains of contemporary US politics.[6] Second, this chapter aims to show that we cannot reasonably expect to achieve adequate reforms (let alone the more ambitious revolutionary objectives described in Part I) without a revolutionary strategy. It is shown that, while there appear to be many differences between the Democratic and Republican parties in the ideologically expected direction (consistent with the pluralist perspective), Democrats have also upheld the neoliberal (and/or conservative) status quo in a variety of ways (consistent with the elitist perspective). However, this chapter does not aim to subject the elite theoretic perspective of US politics (described in the previous chapter) to a falsifiable empirical test, but rather to demonstrate the moral obligation of social revolution.[7] As will be explained

[3] For instance, in 2021, the Pew Research Center found that large majorities of Americans believe the political, economic, and health care systems need to be completely reformed. Wike, R. et al. (2021, October 21). *Citizens in Advanced Economies Want Significant Changes to Their Political Systems*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/10/21/citizens-in-advanced-economies-want-significant-changes-to-their-political-systems/

[4] One exception to this might be the program advanced by the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). However, as will be argued in Chap. 8, partisan-left revolutionary strategies (such as that of the RCP) face insurmountable challenges, especially within the USA.

[5] To assess the justness of an issue from behind a Rawlsian veil of ignorance is to view it without bias. It is to ask: Are the existing policies the ones we would choose if we had no knowledge of our own social position in life (our country, demographic characteristics, income, et cetera)? A just or fair policy is one we would favor from behind a veil of ignorance, knowing that we could just as easily be a loser or a winner from that policy.

[6] While the public policy landscape in the USA is an amalgam of outcomes at the municipal, county, state, and federal levels, this chapter's discussion will focus primarily on the federal level. Some sub-national examples will also be mentioned as well as some relevant international issues.

[7] What standard determines which policy outcomes are morally problematic? Applying the concept of just law from Chap. 2, an outcome is considered unjust where some alternative could realistically achieve a higher net level of equal liberty. This is not always obvious, as we cannot view the counterfactual scenario under such alternatives, and a review of arguments on both sides of each issue is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, the overall weight of the evidence provided in the following review should clearly demonstrate (from behind a Rawlsian veil of ignorance) the injustice of the current policy landscape in the USA.

toward the end of this chapter, this moral obligation holds whether one agrees more with a pluralist or an elitist perspective on US politics.

6.2 Contemporary Public Policy Problems

Economic Policy and Public Goods

Socioeconomic Inequality

According to former Clinton administration Secretary of Labor Robert Reich (2015, p. 47), "We are now in a new gilded age of wealth and power similar to the first Gilded Age, when the nation's antitrust laws were enacted." At the domestic level, high levels of socioeconomic inequality can be viewed as a fountainhead issue contributing to various other problems (Krugman, 2020, p. 292; Street, 2014, p. 65).[8] This is not surprising, as market share tends to coincide with increased political influence (Reich, 2015). In the USA today, monopolistic tendencies can be found among the "Big Tech" companies (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon), among the "Big Four" commercial airlines (Delta, American, United, and Southwest), and in other sectors such as telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, and more.[9]

Since the era of neoliberalism gained momentum in the 1980s, growth in real wages has taken place mostly among high-income earners.[10] Indicative of this, between 1978 and 2013, CEO pay climbed 937% while that of the average worker rose 10.2% (Reich, 2015, p. 97). According to Reich (2015, p. 123), "As corporations have steadily weakened their workers' bargaining power, the link between productivity and workers' income has been severed." During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021, wealth became even more concentrated.[11] Meanwhile, the largest corporations find ways to evade taxes and pay a small share overall. According to Wetzel (2022, p. 11), "Since 1981, the percentage of corporate income

[8] With regard to the level of inequality, see, for instance: Kirsch, N. (2017, November 9). *The 3 Richest Americans Hold More Wealth Than Bottom 50% of the Country, Study Finds*. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/noahkirsch/2017/11/09/the-3-richest-americans-hold-more-wealth-than-bottom-50-of-country-study-finds/

[9] Stewart, E. (2021, July 15). *America's monopoly problem stretches far beyond big tech*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2021/7/15/22578388/biden-hearing-aids-executive-order-lina-khan

[10] Desilver, D. (2018, August 7). *For most U.S. workers, real wages have barely budged in decades*. Pew Research Center. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/07/for-most-us-workers-real-wages-have-barely-budged-for-decades/

[11] Schupak, A. (2021, January 24). *10 Billionaires made enough money during the pandemic to vaccinate the entire world*. Huffington Post. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/billionaires-covid-19-vaccinate-entire-world-oxfam-report_n_600daa1dc5b6d64153accc64

taxes paid has declined by 50%." A ProPublica study released in June 2021 found that the wealthiest Americans pay a lower tax rate than average Americans.[12]

Meanwhile, the total number of homeless in the USA ranged from about 647,000 in 2007, to about 568,000 in 2019,[13] including many school-age children.[14] A related problem is widespread economic insecurity, sometimes called "precarity" (Wetzel, 2022, pp. 23–5). For instance, a 2018 NPR/Marist Poll found that one-fifth of workers in the USA rely on "freelance" or contract jobs, which lack the benefits or steady income of full-time work.[15] Also, a 2019 United Way study reports that nearly half of US families cannot afford to pay for basic necessities.[16] According to Reich (2015, pp. 125–6), "By 2014, 66 percent of American workers were living paycheck to paycheck."

Financial Sector

Other domestic policy problems are found in the financial sector, such as the lack of accountability for the Wall Street bank executives responsible for the 2008–2009 financial crisis. As Reich (2015, p. 77) notes, "six years after Wall Street's near meltdown, not a single executive on the Street had been convicted or even indicted for crimes that wiped out the savings of countless Americans." According to Eisenberg (2021, p. 55), "[I]n the end only one high-level banker, Kareem Serageldin of Credit Suisse, was sent to prison. He received two and a half years for arbitrarily hiking up prices for the bonds he managed."[17] Following the financial crisis, the Dodd-Frank Act of 2010 was implemented to re-regulate the financial sector. However, according to Reich (2015, p. 71), after the legislation was passed, "Wall Street made sure that governmental agencies charged with implementing it did not have the funds to do the job." Thus, for example, the Volcker Rule (which would have restricted the types of derivatives that led to the 2008 crisis) "was still on the

[12] Wiseman, P., & Gordon, M. (2021, June 8). *ProPublica: Many of the uber-rich pay next to no income tax*. ABC News. https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/propublica-uber-rich-pay-income-tax-78149407

[13] National Alliance to End Homelessness. (n.d.). *State of Homelessness: 2020 Edition*. Retrieved June 25, 2020, from https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-2020/

[14] Democracy Now. (2020, February 5). *Homelessness Among School-Age Children Hits Decade-Long High*. https://www.democracynow.org/2020/2/5/headlines/homelessness_among_school_aged_children_hits_decade_long_high

[15] Noguchi, Y. (2018, January 22). *Freelanced: The Rise of the Contract Workforce*. National Public Radio. https://www.npr.org/2018/01/22/578825135/rise-of-the-contract-workers-work-is-different-now

[16] Luhby, T. (2018, May 18). *Almost half of US families can't afford basics like rent and food*. CNN Business. https://money.cnn.com/2018/05/17/news/economy/us-middle-class-basics-study/index.html

[17] On lack of accountability for the 2008–2009 financial crisis, see also: Frontline. (2013, January 22). *The Untouchables*. Public Broadcasting Service. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/untouchables/

drawing board" six years after the crisis. Also, according to Reich (2015, p. 74), the Dodd-Frank legislation "was watered down and the rules to implement it were filled with loopholes." For instance, one of the provisions of the Dodd-Frank Act, declaring banks as "systemically important" (and thus subject to stricter regulation), was loosened under the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act of 2018.[18]

Meanwhile, banks considered "too big to fail" during the crisis have become even larger and more powerful since 2009, "with so much clout they could water down new rules intended to prevent further crises" (Reich, 2015, p. 42). Paul Street (2014, p. 22) highlights "the monumental $14 trillion bailout of the very hyper-opulent financial overlords who crashed the global economy in 2008 and 2009, combined with steadfast refusal to consider nationalizing or breaking up the nation's giant financial institutions." In 2015, US Senator Elizabeth Warren warned that "The biggest banks are collectively much larger than they were before the crisis, and they continue to engage in dangerous practices that could once again crash our economy" (quoted in Hanna, 2018, pp. 89–90). Also, a New York Times report found widespread conflicts of interest as nearly one in five Members of Congress use insider knowledge to buy stocks intersecting with their committee work.[19]

Public Goods and Services

A basic public good is a clean environment, and one of the biggest environmental concerns today is climate change. For its part, the USA remains the largest emitter of greenhouse gasses (on a per capita basis).[20] Among specific organizations, the US military has become the world's biggest polluter, emitting massive amounts of greenhouse gases.[21] Other environmental issues concern animal welfare. In the USA, commercial cattle slaughter totaled over 33 million in 2019.[22] Globally, over fifty billion animals are killed for meat consumption alone every year (Best, 2009). In addition to the ethical problems associated with killing animals, the meat

[18] Smith, T. J. (2018, March 1). *How Democrats Are Helping Trump Dismantle Dodd-Frank*. The New Republic. https://newrepublic.com/article/147247/democrats-helping-trump-dismantle-dodd-frank

[19] Lopez, G. (2022, September 16). *Profiting in Congress*. New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/16/briefing/congress-stock-trading.html

[20] Union of Concerned Scientists. (n.d.). *Each Country's Share of CO2 Emissions*. Retrieved July 16, 2019, from https://www.ucsusa.org/global-warming/science-and-impacts/science/each-countrys-share-of-co2.html

[21] Neimark, B. et al. (2019, June 24). *US military is a bigger polluter than as many as 140 countries – shrinking this war machine is a must*. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/us-military-is-a-bigger-polluter-than-as-many-as-140-countries-shrinking-this-war-machine-is-a-must-119269

[22] United States Department of Agriculture. (n.d.). *Livestock Slaughter: 2019 Summary*. Retrieved June 10, 2021, from https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Todays_Reports/reports/lsan0420.pdf

industry is one of the main contributors to global warming[23] and has been linked to the obesity epidemic in the USA,[24] and growth in animal-to-human diseases.[25] At the international level, a World Wildlife Federation *Living Planet Report* recently found that from 1970 to 2014, the size of the vertebrate animal populations has declined by 60% on average.[26] Another report released by BirdLife International in 2022 warned that one of every eight species of birds is threatened with extinction and half are in decline.[27]

Turning to the topic of health care, the USA has a comparatively "high-cost, low-benefit" system. That is, the USA spends a larger share of its GDP on health care than comparable countries, yet underperforms on public health measures such as infant and maternal mortality rates, and life expectancy.[28] With regard to public infrastructure, in 2017, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave America's overall infrastructure a D+ grade and projected that an additional two trillion dollars would be needed over the next ten years to bring the country's infrastructure up to proper standards.[29] Meanwhile, a June 2019 Pew Research Center report found that state-level investments in infrastructure as a percent of GDP was at a 50-year low.[30] The deteriorating state of US infrastructure is apparent during catastrophic events such as the breaching of the Edenford and Sanford dams in Michigan in May of 2020,[31] and the failure of the water treatment system in Jackson, Mississippi, in late

[23] Walsh, B. (2008, September 10). *Meat: Making Global Warming Worse*. Time. http://content.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1,839,995,00.html

[24] Wilson, D. (n.d.). *Eating Meat is Linked to Obesity*. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. Retrieved June 10, 2021, from https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/obesity/

[25] UN News. (2020, July 6). *New UN report outlines ways to curb growing spread of animal-to-human diseases*. https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1067711

[26] Yong, E. (2018, October 31). *Wait, have we really wiped out 60% of animals?* The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/10/have-we-really-killed-60-percent-animals-1970/574549/

[27] Democracy Now. (2022, October 6). *1 in 8 Birds Threatened with Extinction Due to Habitat Loss, Pollution and Climate Crisis*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/10/6/headlines/1_in_8_birds_threatened_with_extinction_due_to_habitat_loss_pollution_and_climate_crisis

[28] Etehad, M., & Kim, K. (2017, July 18). *The U.S. spends more on healthcare than any other country – but not with better health outcomes*. Los Angeles Times. https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-healthcare-comparison-20170715-htmlstory.html

[29] American Society of Civil Engineers. (n.d.). *2017 Infrastructure Report Card*. Retrieved July 3, 2018, from https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/

[30] Rosewicz, B. (2019, June 4). *"Lost Decade" Casts a Post-Recession Shadow on State Finances*. The Pew Charitable Trusts. https://www.pewtrusts.org/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2019/06/lost-decade-casts-a-post-recession-shadow-on-state-finances

[31] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2020, May 20). *Michigan floods: Evacuations after Edenville and Sanford dams breached*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52735170

August of 2022.[32] Other infrastructure problems include the harmful levels of lead in public water systems[33] and lead-based paint in public schools across the country.[34]

Other policy problems concern public education. As of 2018, collective student loan debt was estimated at $1.5 trillion, surpassing both credit card and auto loan debt, and second only to mortgage debt.[35] Meanwhile, there has also been a gradual privatization of the public higher education system via increasing reliance on student fees.[36] According to Reich (2015, p. 148), "State and local financing for public higher education came to about $76 billion in 2013, nearly 10% less than a decade before." Also, an OECD study found that the USA is one of the few developed countries to provide more funding per pupil to primary and secondary schools serving higher-income children than to those serving lower-income students (Reich, 2015, p. 141). On the topic of mass media, many have been concerned by threats to net neutrality,[37] as well as the oligopolistic control of mass media companies.[38]

[32] Vera, A. (2022, August 31). *The water crisis in Jackson, Mississippi*. CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/30/us/jackson-water-system-failing-tuesday/index.html

[33] High levels of lead were found in the water supplies of Flint and Benton Harbor, Michigan. Democracy Now. (2021, October 18). *"Racism plays a major part": Like in Flint, lead pipes leave Benton Harbor, Michigan, with toxic water*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/10/18/benton_harbor_water_crisis. The water supply of Newark, New Jersey was similarly found to be contaminated with lead. Leyden, L. (2018, October 30). *In Echo of Flint, Mich., Water Crisis Now Hits Newark*. New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/30/nyregion/newark-lead-water-pipes.html. For a nation-wide study, see: Young, A., & Nichols, M. (2017, March 27). *Beyond Flint: Excessive lead levels found in almost 2000 water systems across all 50 states*. USA Today. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2016/03/11/nearly-2000-water-systems-fail-lead-tests/81220466/

[34] Wood, M. R. (2019, July 28). *Lead-Based Paint Found in Half of All Inspected Schools*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/lead-based-paint-found-in-half-of-all-inspected-schools/

[35] Friedman, F. (2018, June 13). *Student Loan Debt Statistics In 2018: A $1.5 Trillion Crisis*. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/zackfriedman/2018/06/13/student-loan-debt-statistics-2018/

[36] Wang, A. X. (2016, January 8). *Tuition is increasing at alarming rates at US public universities*. Quartz. https://qz.com/588920/tuition-is-increasing-at-alarming-rates-at-us-public-universities/

[37] Johnson, A. (2018, September 30). *California enacts net neutrality bill, DOJ counters with lawsuit*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/internet/gov-jerry-brown-signs-bill-restore-net-neutrality-california-n915221

[38] Lutz, A. (2012, June 14). *These 6 Corporations Control 90% of the Media in America*. Business Insider. https://www.businessinsider.com/these-6-corporations-control-90-of-the-media-in-america-2012-6

Constitutional Rights and Liberties

Policing

Public policy problems can also be found in the domain of constitutional rights and liberties. For example, there are frequent cases of excessive force used by the police in the USA.[39] In April 2021, a group of leading human rights lawyers argued that the police killing of African Americans amounts to a crime against humanity.[40] Others have drawn attention to the increasing militarization of domestic policing.[41] Police were also documented violating protestor rights in the Summer of 2020 after the killing of George Floyd,[42] as well as attacks on journalists during those protests.[43]

Police are usually not held accountable for excessive force. For example, the New York Police Department officer who choked Eric Garner to death was acquitted by a grand jury in 2014, and later cleared of federal civil rights charges by the Justice Department.[44] In March 2020, Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old African American woman, was shot to death by police in her own apartment. The officer responsible for the killing was eventually fired during the George Floyd protests but was not indicted by a grand jury for the killing.[45] In October 2021, the Justice Department announced it would not file federal charges against the white police officer who shot Jacob Blake multiple times in the back while he leaned into his car where his three sons were seated.[46] There are many other examples too numerous to list here. An exception to the rule was Derek Chauvin, the Minnesota police officer who killed George Floyd and was later charged with murder on May 29, 2020, after

[39] Lartey, J. (2017, October 11). *US police killings undercounted by half, study using Guardian data finds*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/oct/11/police-killings-counted-harvard-study

[40] Pilkington, E. (2021, April 27). *Police killings of Black Americans amount to crimes against humanity, international inquiry finds*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/apr/26/us-police-killings-black-americans-crimes-against-humanity

[41] Filkins, D. (2016, May 13). *"Do Not Resist" and the Crisis of Police Militarization*. The New Yorker. https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/do-not-resist-and-the-crisis-of-police-militarization

[42] Rahman, K. (2020, June 23). *Police Violated Human Rights of George Floyd Protestors 125 Times:AmnestyInternational*.Newsweek.https://www.newsweek.com/amnesty-documents-police-violence-map-1512536

[43] Klebnikov, S. (2020, June 4). *Journalists Targeted While Covering Protests: 328 Press Freedom Violations and Counting*. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/sergeiklebnikov/2020/06/04/journalists-targeted-while-covering-protests-279-press-freedom-violations-and-counting/

[44] Katersky, A. (2019, July 16). *Justice Department will not file charges against officer involved in Eric Garner's death*. ABC News. https://abcnews.go.com/US/justice-department-file-charges-officer-involved-eric-garners/story

[45] Lovan, D., & Blackburn, P. (2020, September 23). *Police officers not charged for killing Breonna Taylor*. AP News. https://apnews.com/28a283922de8784f6fca5c42fe8e5bca

[46] Democracy Now. (2021, October 11). *Justice Department: No federal charges in police shooting of Jacob Blake*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/10/11/headlines/justice_department_no_federal_charges_in_police_shooting_of_jacob_blake

three days of rioting.[47] Chauvin became the first white police officer convicted of murdering a black man in the State of Minnesota and was sentenced to twenty-two and a half years in prison.[48]

Civil and Criminal Procedure

Turning to civil and criminal procedures, the USA continues to have the highest incarceration rates in the world.[49] There is also widespread use of solitary confinement in the USA, classified by human rights groups as a form of torture.[50] The USA also continues to use the death penalty,[51] a practice condemned by human rights groups such as Amnesty International.[52] Debt claims in state-level civil courts are widespread, and defendants often lack counsel in such cases.[53] Also, many public defender systems in the USA are underfunded.[54] On the topic of due process, many were alarmed by subsections 1021–1022 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2012, which authorized indefinite military detention of US citizens without trial for providing "substantial support" to al Qaida, the Taliban, or "associated forces" (Street, 2014, p. 168).[55]

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[47] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2020, June 3). *New charges brought over George Floyd's death*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52915019

[48] Griffith, J. (2021, June 25). *Derek Chauvin sentenced to 22.5 years for the murder of George Floyd*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/derek-chauvin-be-sentenced-murder-death-george-floyd-n1272332

[49] Flatow, N. (2014, September 17). *The United States has the Largest Prison Population in the World – And It's Growing*. Think Progress. https://archive.thinkprogress.org/the-united-states-has-the-largest-prison-population-in-the-world-and-its-growing-d4a35bc9652f/

[50] Center for Constitutional Rights. (2017, March). *Solitary Confinement: Torture in U.S. Prisons*. https://ccrjustice.org/home/get-involved/tools-resources/fact-sheets-and-faqs/torture-use-solitary-confinement-us-prisons

[51] Kelly, L. (2020, July 10). *EU condemns U.S. for resuming federal executions*. The Hill. https://thehill.com/policy/international/506730-eu-condemns-us-for-resuming-federal-executions/

[52] Amnesty International. (n.d.). *Death Penalty*. Retrieved June 11, 2021, from https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty/

[53] Rickard, E. (2020, May 6). *How Debt Collectors Are Transforming the Business of State Courts*. Pew Charitable Trusts. https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2020/05/how-debt-collectors-are-transforming-the-business-of-state-courts

[54] Craine, T. (2019, August 1). *One Lawyer. Five Years. 3802 Cases*. The Marshall Project. https://www.themarshallproject.org/2019/08/01/one-lawyer-five-years-3-802-cases

[55] More precisely, the NDAA of 2012 stated that Congress "affirms" indefinite detention powers already granted to the president under the Authorization for Use of Military Force of 2001 (the resolution authoring the use of military force against those responsible for the 9-11-01 attacks). The indefinite detention provision was later upheld by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in July of 2013. Wikipedia. (n.d.). *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012*. Retrieved August 27, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Defense_Authorization_Act_for_Fiscal_Year_2012

Meanwhile, the National Security Agency continues to collect metadata about the American people without a warrant.[56] The FBI, in turn, often uses that information to conduct warrantless searches.[57] In 2021, the FBI conducted over three million searches of private electronic data from Americans without a warrant.[58] In September of 2020, a US Court of Appeals ruled that the NSA's metadata collection exposed by whistleblower Edward Snowden was unlawful.[59] The Justice Department also successfully prosecuted NSA whistleblower Reality Winner in 2018.[60] Other prominent whistleblowers recently targeted by the federal government include Chelsea Manning,[61] Edward Snowden,[62] and Daniel Hale.[63] The federal government has also targeted journalists such as Wikileaks founder Julian Assange.[64] In 2018, Reporters Without Borders added the USA to the list of most dangerous countries for journalists, given events such as the shooting deaths of five Capital Gazette newspaper employees in Annapolis, Maryland that June.[65]

Voting Rights and Elections

Although Jim Crow laws (such as poll taxes and literacy tests for voting) were overturned during the civil rights movement, threats to voting rights continue. Evidence of this can be found, for instance, in the Interstate Voter Registration Crosscheck

[56] Coldewey, D. (2018, May 4). *NSA triples metadata collection numbers, sucking up over 500 million call records in 2017*. Tech Crunch. https://techcrunch.com/2018/05/04/nsa-triples-metadata-collection-numbers-sucking-up-over-500-million-call-records-in-2017/

[57] Democracy Now (2019, October 10). *FBI Carried Out Thousands of Unconstitutional Searches of NSA Archives*. https://www.democracynow.org/2019/10/10/headlines

[58] Democracy Now. (2022, May 2). *FBI Carried Out at Least 3.4 Million Warrantless Searches of U.S. Residents' Data*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/5/2/headlines/fbi_carried_out_at_least_34_million_warrantless_searches_of_us_residents_data

[59] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2020, September 3). *NSA surveillance exposed by Snowden ruled unlawful*. https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-54013527

[60] Timm, T. (2018, June 26). *Whistleblower Reality Winner, Charged Under the Espionage Act for Helping to Inform Public of Russian Election Meddling, Pleads Guilty*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2018/06/26/reality-winner-plea-deal/

[61] Barakat, M. (2020, March 12). *Ex-Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning freed from jail*. ABC News. https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/judge-orders-chelsea-manning-released-jail-69569977

[62] Ray, M. (2021, June 17). *Edward Snowden: American intelligence contractor*. Encyclopaedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edward-Snowden

[63] Democracy Now. (2021, July 28). *Whistleblower Daniel Hale Sentenced to 45 Months for Exposing U.S. Drone Program*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/7/28/headlines/whistleblower_daniel_hale_sentenced_to_45_months_for_exposing_us_drone_program

[64] Ray, M. (2021, June 29). *Julian Assange: Australian computer programmer*. Encyclopaedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Julian-Assange

[65] Reuters. (2018, December 18). *United States added to list of most dangerous countries for journalists for first time*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/united-states-added-list-most-dangerous-countries-journalists-first-time-n949676

System.[66] Also, after the election of Joe Biden in November 2020, spurred on by Donald Trump's unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud, several Republican Party-controlled state legislatures advanced legislation in 2021 making it more difficult to cast a ballot.[67] Also noteworthy is the wealthy's increasingly disproportional level of influence over election outcomes. Since the US Supreme Court 2012 ruling in the Citizens United v. FEC case, "Not only has the amount spent on elections exploded; more and more of that rising total is coming from the superrich" (Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 67). For example, according to a Brennon Center report, during the 2022 midterm campaigns, the 21 biggest donor families contributed at least $15 million for a total of $783 million, more than at least 3.7 million small donors.[68]

Immigration

Among the morally problematic policy areas in the USA, the violation of immigrant rights should also be mentioned, including the separation of migrant children from their families,[69] the deportation of asylum seekers back into life-threatening situations,[70] and forced hysterectomies performed on women held in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities.[71] A report released in June 2021 revealed that ICE used water deprivation and threats of prosecution to deter hunger strikes, force-fed immigrant prisoners who went on hunger strike, and performed forced urinary catheterization (illegal under international law, according to *Democracy Now's* Amy Goodman).[72]

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[66] Hartmann, T., & Greene, R. (2017, January 10). *The massive election-rigging scandal the media ignored*. Salon. https://www.salon.com/2017/01/10/the-massive-election-rigging-scandal-the-media-ignored_partner/

[67] Schouten, F., & Mena, K. (2021, March 30). *Republicans press ahead with voting restrictions in key states*. CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/30/politics/voting-rights-republicans-restrictions-key-states/index.html

[68] Vanderwalker, I., & Paez, M. (2022, November 16). *4 Takeaways About Money in the Midterms*. Brennan Center for Justice. https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/4-takeaways-about-money-midterms

[69] Cumming-Bruce, N. (2018, June 5). *Taking Migrant Children from Parents is Illegal, U.N. Tells U.S.* The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/05/world/americas/us-un-migrant-children-families.html

[70] Fox, B. (2020, February 5). *At least 138 deported to El Salvador were later killed, human rights group says*. Public Broadcasting Service. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/at-least-138-deported-to-el-salvador-were-later-killed-human-rights-group-says

[71] Walker, C. (2020, September 15). *Whistleblower on Doctor at ICE Facility: "Everybody he sees has a hysterectomy"*. TruthOut. https://truthout.org/articles/whistleblower-on-doctor-at-ice-facility-everybody-he-sees-has-a-hysterectomy/

[72] Democracy Now. (2021, June 24). *ICE force-fed immigrant prisoners who went on hunger strike against poor conditions*. https://www.democracynow.rg/2021/6/24/headlines/ice_force_fed_immigrant_prisoners_who_went_on_hunger_strike_against_poor_conditions

Other Domestic Issues

There are a variety of other domestic problems as well which could be viewed as symptomatic of more fundamental issues such as socioeconomic inequality. These include an opioid epidemic,[73] increasing rates of suicide[74] and other "deaths of despair,"[75] an obesity epidemic,[76] comparatively high levels of gun-related deaths,[77] elderly isolation,[78] and comparatively high levels of workers' rights violations (Reich, 2015, p. 131).[79] Since 2000, life expectancy among middle-aged non-Hispanic whites in the USA has been falling, especially among the less educated and unemployed, largely due to drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and suicide (Inglehart, 2018, p. 197).

Foreign Policy

Trade Agreements

Free trade arguably has many advantages over trade protectionism, such as lower prices for consumers and economic efficiency, as David Ricardo's comparative advantage theory demonstrated. However, there have also been problematic aspects of US trade agreements, such as allowing multinational corporations to challenge US sovereign laws (via "Investor-State Dispute Settlements"),[80] making

[73] Felter, C. (2019, January 17). *The U.S. Opioid Epidemic*. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-opioid-epidemic

[74] Center for Disease Control. (2018, November 27). *Suicide rising across the US*. https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/suicide/index.html

[75] Dodge, B. (2020, January 14). *What Are So-Called Deaths of Despair? Experts Say They're on the Rise*. Newsweek. https://www.newsweek.com/what-so-called-deaths-despair-experts-say-rise-1481975

[76] Barclay, E., Belluz, J., & Zarracina, J. (2018, August 9). *It's easy to become obese in America. These 7 charts explain why*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/2016/8/31/12368246/obesity-america-2018-charts

[77] Quealy, K., & Sanger-Katz, M. (2016, June 13). *Comparing Gun Deaths by Country: The U.S. is in a Different World*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/14/upshot/compare-these-gun-death-rates-the-us-is-in-a-different-world.html

[78] Livingston, G. (2019, July 3). *On average, older adults spend over half their waking hours alone*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/03/on-average-older-adults-spend-over-half-their-waking-hours-alone/

[79] O'Brien, F., & Schneeweiss, Z. (2020, June 18). *U.S. Ranked Worst for Workers' Rights Among Major Economies*. Bloomberg. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-06-18/u-s-ranked-worst-for-workers-rights-among-major-economies

[80] Gabriel, D. (2008, October 11). *Chapter Eleven of NAFTA Remains a Threat to National Sovereignty*. Centre for Research on Globalization. https://www.globalresearch.ca/chapter-eleven-of-nafta-remains-a-threat-to-national-sovereignty/10640. Although the USMCA ("NAFTA 2.0") largely eliminated NAFTA's investor-state dispute settlement provisions, oil and gas companies will still be able to challenge state policies interfering with their profits. Aronoff, K. (2020, January 17). *The New U.S. Trade Deal Is Climate Sabotage*. The New Republic. https://newrepublic.com/article/156240/new-us-trade-deal-climate-sabotage

pro-environment reforms such as the Green New Deal more difficult to implement,[81] and the outsourcing of American jobs.[82] According to Wetzel (2022, p. 17), "Since the 1990s, 1-2 million US jobs have been lost due either to firms moving production to other countries or to imports (especially after China joined the World Trade Organization in 2000)."

Job outsourcing could be viewed as a necessary part of free trade and the harnessing of comparative advantage. However, more can be done to limit the precarity experienced by those negatively impacted by free trade agreements, such as promoting a stronger role for apprenticeships and job retraining programs, and especially by promoting a robust public economic sphere (argued in Chap. 3). US worker retraining programs such as Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) are not well integrated with unemployment insurance, and the latter offers a comparatively low level (less than 50%) of income replacement (Schulze-Cleven, 2015).

Foreign Wars and Interventions

Major policy problems in the foreign policy domain include those associated with the "War on Terrorism" such as the War in Afghanistan[83] (and government lies about the level of success achieved in that conflict[84]), water boarding and other acts of torture,[85] drone strikes (and a lack of due process for the targets),[86] military cover-ups of US war crimes,[87] and indefinite detention (notably in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba).[88] After 9/11, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) maintained a chain of secret "black site" prisons where detainees were interrogated and tortured (Laursen, 2021, p. 92). During the War on Terror, more than 800,000 people were estimated to have been killed in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, and Yemen, at a cost of $6.4

[81] Urie, R. (2019, July 26). *How NAFTA Killed the Green New Deal.* Counter Punch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/07/26/how-nafta-killed-the-green-new-deal/

[82] Wallach, L. (2014, January 6). *NAFTA at 20: One Million U.S. Jobs Lost, Higher Income Inequality*. HuffingtonPost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/nafta-at-20-one-million-u_b_4550207

[83] Nelson, Craig. (2019, April 24). *Afghan and U.S. Forces, Not Taliban, Killed More Civilians This Year*. Wall Street Journal. https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghan-and-u-s-forces-not-taliban-killed-more-civilians-this-year-11556120667

[84] Babbin, J. (2019, December 28). *The "Afghanistan Papers" and the delusions of nation-building*. The Washington Times. https://amp.washingtontimes.com/news/2019/dec/28/the-afghanistan-papers-and-the-delusions-of-nation/

[85] Human Rights Watch. (2014, December 9). *USA and Torture: A History of Hypocrisy*. https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/12/09/usa-and-torture-history-hypocrisy

[86] Jaffer, J. (2016, November 15). *How the US justifies drone strikes: targeted killing, secrecy and the law*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/15/targeted-killing-secrecy-drone-memos-excerpt

[87] Philipps, D., & Schmitt, E. (2021, November 13). *How the U.S. Hid an Airstrike that Killed Dozens of Civilians in Syria*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/13/us/us-airstrikes-civilian-deaths.html

[88] Hudson, A. (2019, July 30). *The 2020 Candidates Are Ignoring Guantánamo*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/the-2020-candidates-are-ignoring-guantanamo/

trillion to US taxpayers.[89] During operations against the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS), a secretive unit of US military carried out drone strikes on innocent civilians – men, women, and children – between 2014 and 2017 with little to no oversight or accountability.[90] More generally, in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, the US military has tended to undercount civilian deaths from US airstrikes and absolve its members from wrongdoing.[91]

Other problematic foreign policy outcomes include military spending amounting to about 36% of the global total (three times more than second-placed China),[92] acts of international aggression such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq,[93] interventions in the political affairs of sovereign state governments,[94] and support for authoritarian regimes such as Saudi Arabia[95] as well as their war crimes[96] and famine in Yemen (attributable to the Saudi-led coalition's bombing campaign and blockade, and to a lesser extent the Houthi rebels).[97] Other problematic policies include crucial US

[89] Goodman, A. (2020, September 11). *US Wars Displaced at Least 37 Million People Since 9/11 Attacks*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/video/us-wars-displaced-at-least-37-million-people-since-9-11-attacks/

[90] Philipps, D., Schmitt, E., & Mazzetti, M. (2021, December 12). *Civilian Death Mounted as Secret Unit Pounded ISIS*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/12/us/civilian-deaths-war-isis.html;Democracy Now. (2022, May 18). *Pentagon: No one to be held accountable for US airstrike that killed 70 civilians in Syria*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/5/18/headlines/pentagon_no_one_to_be_held_accountable_for_us_airstrike_that_killed_70_civilians_in_syria

[91] Leonhardt, D. (2021, December 20). *The Human Toll*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/20/briefing/us-airstrikes-human-toll.html

[92] McCarthy, N. (2017, April 24). *The Top 15 Countries For Military Expenditure in 2016*. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2017/04/24/the-top-15-countries-for-military-expenditure-in-2016-infographic/#729ec01a43f3

[93] MacAskill, E., & Borger, J. (2004, September 16). *Iraq war was illegal and breached UN charter, says Annan*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/sep/16/iraq.iraq

[94] I review both Cold War and post-Cold War examples of such interventions in the "post-imperialism" part of Chap. 7.

[95] Chughtai, A. (2017, May 18). *US-Saudi relations: A timeline*. Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2017/05/saudi-relations-timeline-170518112421011.html

[96] Almosawa, S., & Hubbard, B. (2018, August 9). *Saudi Coalition Airstrike Hits School Bus in Yemen, Killing Dozens*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/09/world/middleeast/yemen-airstrike-school-bus-children.html

[97] Pierson, C. (2021, January 15). *A Yemeni Famine Made in Washington and Riyadh*. Counter Punch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/01/15/a-yemeni-famine-made-in-washington-and-riyadh/

support for Israel's illegal settlements,[98] apartheid,[99] ethnic cleansing,[100] and war crimes against Palestinians.[101]

The Inadequacy of Reformism

Of course, many of the issues mentioned above are often addressed, to varying extents, as part of the established political processes. However, such reforms usually do not fully resolve the problem. For example, the Affordable Care Act of 2009 (or "Obamacare") reduced the share of Americans without health insurance from 15.5% to 9.2% (adding about 20 million Americans to the ranks of the insured).[102] More recently, in August 2022, Senate Democrats narrowly approved the Inflation Reduction Act, which is expected to reduce the cost of health insurance and give Medicare officials some power to negotiate prices with pharmaceutical companies.[103] However, both reforms fail to achieve universal health insurance or even a public health insurance option, and the new power to negotiate drug prices remains limited.[104]

On the topic of infrastructure, the Biden administration's proposed $1 trillion infrastructure bill was approved by the US Congress in 2021.[105] However, that legislation would only replace a small fraction of lead pipes used in the country[106] and

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[98] Shezaf, H. (2021, January 11). *Israel Announces New Settlement Construction Days Before Biden Inauguration*. Haaretz. https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-to-advance-some-850-housing-units-in-west-bank-before-biden-takes-office-1.9441287

[99] Human Rights Watch. (2021, April 27). *Abusive Israeli Policies Constitute Crimes of Apartheid, Persecution*. https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/27/abusive-israeli-policies-constitute-crimes-apartheid-persecution

[100] Ackelsberg, E. (2018, May 15). *Israel's 70-Year History of Ethnic Cleansing*. Socialist Worker. https://socialistworker.org/2018/05/15/israels-70-year-history-of-ethnic-cleansing

[101] Lazare, S. (2014, July 28). *In "Ugly" Resolution, US Politicians Back Israel's Assault onGaza*.CommonDreams.https://www.commondreams.org/news/2014/07/28/ugly-resolution-us-politicians-back-israels-assault-gaza

[102] Leonhardt, D. (2021, January 29). *Biden's Health Care Moves*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/29/briefing/novavax-vaccine-cicely-tyson-robinhood-gm.html

[103] Leonhardt, D. (2022, August 9). *Overlooked Provisions*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/09/briefing/health-care-provisions-senate-climate-bill.html

[104] Democracy Now. (2022, August 9). *Under Senate Bill, Medicare can negotiate some drug prices, but power to lower prices remains limited*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/8/9/democrats_739b_bill_fossil_fuels_giveaways

[105] Democracy Now. (2021, November 8). *House passes bipartisan $1.2 Infrastructure Bill without vote on $1.75 Build Back Better package*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/11/8/headlines/house_passes_bipartisan_12_infrastructure_bill_without_vote_on_175t_build_back_better_package

[106] Zhang, S. (2021, November 8). *Ocasio-Cortez Slams Right-Wing Democrats for Watering Down Build Back Better Act*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/ocasio-cortez-slams-right-wing-democrats-for-watering-down-build-back-better-act/

falls far short of the two trillion dollar infrastructure investment needed according to the American Society of Civil Engineers report cited above. With regard to incarceration, between 2000 and 2022, the racial gap among inmates in the US state prisons has declined by about 40%, due in part to a decline in Black arrest rates for nonviolent property and drug crimes.[107] However, the racial incarceration gap remains and, more generally, the USA continues to have the highest incarceration rates in the world as of 2022.[108]

Turning to the environment, the aforementioned Inflation Reduction Act also includes $369 billion for renewable energy and greenhouse gas reductions and is expected to reduce emissions by 40% by 2030. However, the legislation also provides subsidies and the sale of public lands and waters to the fossil fuel industry. More generally, the environmental activist group the Sunrise Movement tweeted that "The Inflation Reduction Act is not the Green New Deal. It should be bigger."[109]

The bottom line is that, amidst the ongoing policy cycle status quo adjustments, most of the major policy problems reviewed above, as well as the more fundamental issue of socioeconomic inequality, remain firmly entrenched in the status quo. In response, one might argue that politics is "the art of the possible," or that we should not allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good. However, in Chap. 7, it will be argued that, while politics is the art of the possible, much more could be possible with a different political system. Also, in Chap. 8, it will be shown that a revolutionary strategy is better than reformism in terms of both "harm reduction" and advancing equal liberty.

In what follows, it will be argued that one cannot reasonably expect to resolve the morally problematic landscape of public policy (let alone achieve the more ambitious revolutionary objectives described in Chap. 7) without a revolutionary strategy (the focus of Chap. 8). Partisan divisions in the expected ideological direction – with Democrats taking positions to the left of the Republicans – are most common in contemporary US politics, consistent with pluralist theory (reviewed next). However, the track record of Democratic Party right-leaning stances (reviewed subsequently) arguably reveals a tacit bipartisan consensus favoring the status quo, consistent with the elite theoretic perspective described in the previous chapter.

From the pluralist theoretic perspective, political representatives are doing the best they can under the circumstances to serve the public interest. Democrats make good faith efforts to achieve progressive reforms but are constrained by the system of checks and balances, and partisan gridlock. By contrast, according to this book's elite cooptation model, contemporary reforms reflect *sophisticated*

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[107] Sabol, W. J., & Johnson, T. L. (2022, September). *Justice System Disparities: Black-White National Imprisonment Trends, 2000 to 2020*. Council on Criminal Justice. https://counciloncj.foleon.com/reports/racial-disparities/national-trends

[108] World Population Review. (n.d.). *Incarceration Rates by Country 2022*. Retrieved November 6, 2022, from https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/incarceration-rates-by-country

[109] Frost, R. (2022, August 8). *Inflation Reduction Act: 5 key takeaways from the most significant climate bill in US history*. Euronews. https://www.euronews.com/green/2022/08/08/inflation-reduction-act-5-key-takeaways-from-the-most-significant-climate-bill-in-us-histo

conservatism – concessions (i.e., popular policies) just generous enough to maintain the status quo (Domhoff, 2006, p. 87). The track record of right-leaning Democratic Party stances (reviewed later in this chapter) does not provide unambiguous evidence favoring the elite over pluralist theoretic explanations of US politics, although this does not undermine the moral obligation for social revolutionary (as explained toward the end of this chapter).

6.3 The Pluralist View: Partisan Polarization

General Signs of Partisan Division

An often-expressed concern is that US politics has become too polarized along partisan lines. There is some evidence consistent with this assertion. For example, a recent analysis of political parties' election manifestos reveals a vast ideological distance between the Democrats and the Republicans, although the ideological center is to the right of West European party systems.[110] An analysis of legislative roll call vote data also shows that the two major parties have become increasingly polarized in recent decades.[111] New York Times columnist Paul Krugman (2020, p. 291) observes that "[since the 1970s] political polarization has marched side by side with economic polarization, as income inequality has soared."[112]

According to Schubert et al. (2014, p. 202), "Conflict between parties occurs most frequently over taxation, social-welfare programs, health care, the environment, 'values' issues, and the regulation of business and labor. It is particularly apparent on spending and taxing proposals in the budget." One regularly hears of anecdotal examples where divisions between the parties are in the ideologically expected directions, reinforcing conventional expectations that the Democrats will

[110] Chinoy, S. (2019, June 26). *What Happened to America's Political Center of Gravity?* The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/26/opinion/sunday/republican-platform-far-right.html. Despite the recent increase in partisan polarization, the US party system still exhibits a comparatively narrow ideological spectrum with a rightward tilt evinced, for instance, by the lack of a significant social democratic party (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 190).

[111] Lewis, J. (2020, June 4). *Polarization in Congress*. Vote View. https://www.voteview.com/articles/party_polarization

[112] Consistent with Krugman's observation, there are signs of a broader correlation between partisan polarization and socioeconomic inequality. Within the USA, partisan polarization has been most pronounced during the two periods of high inequality: the first (1870s–1890s) and second Gilded Age (1980s-present) (Drutman, 2020, p. 96). At the cross-national level, inequality and political polarization in the USA have been more pronounced than in Europe, where inequality has been less severe and evidence of polarization more mixed (Przeworski, 2019, p. 114). From this book's elite theoretic perspective, this correlation not surprising: in an unequal democracy, elites promote partisan polarization to conceal the underlying elite-mass divide, and to make it more difficult for the masses to form a broad-based nonpartisan revolutionary coalition.

take a left-leaning stance, while the Republican Party will take a right-leaning stance (consistent with pluralist theory's emphasis on genuine electoral choice).

For instance, Republican presidential administrations regularly appoint ultraconservatives to agencies that are ideologically opposed to that very agency. For example, for Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) chief, Trump selected former Oklahoma attorney general Scott Pruitt, despite his close ties to the oil and gas industry. Pruitt then began to reverse the Obama administration's Clean Power Plan and fuel economy standards. More generally, Hacker and Pierson (2020, pp. 157–8) observe that "Throughout the administrative state, the Trump team placed foxes in charge of the hen house." By contrast, Democratic administrations tend to appoint liberals who are much more supportive of their new agency (Domhoff, 2006, p. 165). For example, in July of 2021, President Biden announced plans to nominate a leading antitrust attorney to lead the Justice Department's Antitrust Division.[113]

Krugman (2020, p. 358) argues that the Republicans exhibit a greater general tendency toward authoritarianism: "The fact is that the Republican Party is ready, even eager, to become an American version of Law and Justice [Poland] or Fidesz [Hungary]." Consistent with that view, Donald Trump endorsed Hungary's far-right prime minister Viktor Orbán in January of 2022,[114] and the Republican-aligned Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC) hosted its annual 2022 conference in Hungary where Orbán was the keynote speaker.[115] Below are some other examples of partisan divisions (in the ideologically expected direction) in different policy areas.

Economic Policy and Public Goods

Fiscal and Trade Policy

In conventional US political discourse, the Democrats are viewed as the party of "big government" (favoring high tax rates and government spending levels), while the Republicans are viewed as the opposite (i.e., fiscally conservative). As an

[113] Democracy Now. (2021, July 22). *Biden Taps Leading Antitrust Attorney to Key DOJ Post*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/7/22/headlines/biden_taps_leading_antitrust_attorney_to_key_doj_post

[114] Sheth, S., & Relman, E. (2022, January 3). *Trump endorses authoritarian Hungarian leader Viktor Orbán, praising him as "strong" and "respected by all"*. Yahoo News. https://news.yahoo.com/trump-endorses-authoritarian-hungarian-leader-165355799.html. According to a YouGov poll from August 2020, about 75% of Republican Party respondents felt that democracy was better than authoritarian alternatives, while about 96% of Democrats gave that response. Koerth, M., & Mazumder, S. (2020, August 5). *What Happened In Portland Shows Just How Fragile Our Democracy Is*. FiveThirtyEight. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-federal-clampdown-on-portland-shows-just-how-fragile-our-democracy-is/

[115] Democracy Now. (2022, May 20). *Hungary's Far-Right Prime Minister, Promoter of "Great Replacement" Theory, Headlines CPAC Gathering*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/5/20/headlines/hungarys_far_right_president_promoter_of_great_replacement_theory_headlines_cpac_gathering

imperfect example, after World War II, the left-leaning liberal-labor coalition (led by Democrats) successfully advanced Keynesian economic stimulus policies but were eventually defeated in Congress by the conservative voting bloc of Southern Democrats and Northern Republicans (Domhoff, 2006, p. 47). Fast-forwarding a bit, after the 1994 midterm election, the Republican Party majority (led by Newt Gingrich in the House) sought to scale back social programs for the poor and middle class, although Clinton was able to block this effort after a three-week government shutdown (Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 53). The Democratic leadership in Congress also took a stand against Republican George W. Bush's attempt to privatize Social Security (Krugman, 2020, p. 26).

With regard to tax policy, Krugman (2020, p. 229) contrasts the tax *cuts* of President George W. Bush and Republican-majority states such as Kansas with the tax *hikes* of President Barack Obama and Democratic-majority states such as California. Another conventional view is that Democrats are more likely to favor tax cuts for the middle and lower classes, while Republicans are likely to favor tax cuts for the wealthier classes. In line with that expectation, Democratic Party leaders (including Obama) passed the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, which achieved a downward redistribution of wealth (Piston, 2018, p. 152). In June 2021, the Biden administration withdrew a Trump-era proposal that would have removed three million Americans from food stamps,[116] and in August 2021 announced the largest increase in the program's history.[117] Also, the $1.9 trillion COVID-19 rescue plan signed by Biden in 2021 contributed funding to community center renovations, housing initiatives, and health programs, among other services.[118]

With regard to the topic of trade, the older conventional view of the partisan difference was that Republicans were free traders, while the Democrats were more protectionist. Consistent with that view, the rise of job outsourcing in the 1970s was first advanced by the corporate-conservative alliance led by Republicans, over the opposition of the liberal-labor coalition led by Democrats (Domhoff, 2006, pp. 32–33). More recently, however, the partisan division over trade has become blurred, with Democratic Party leaders such as Biden and Obama tending to favor free trade agreements while Republican leaders (such as Trump) are more protectionist.[119]

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[116] Luhby, T. (2021, June 9). *Biden nixes Trump proposal that would have kicked three million off food stamps*. CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/09/politics/food-stamps-biden-trump/index.html

[117] Walker, C. (2021, August 16). *Biden Admin Announces Largest Increase to Food Stamps in Program History*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/biden-admin-announces-largest-increase-to-food-stamps-in-program-history/

[118] Leonhardt, D. (April 21, 2022). *Perils of Invisible Government*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/21/briefing/biden-invisible-government-american-rescue-plan.html

[119] In May 2022, the Biden administration re-engaged Asian allies with the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, although this aimed to make the supply chain run smoothly rather than increase market access per se. Leonhardt, D. (2022, May 23). *Biden in Asia*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/briefing/trade-deal-biden-asia.html

Environmental Regulations

Contrasts in the ideologically expected direction can also be found with regard to domestic environmental policy. For instance, to limit greenhouse gas emissions, President Obama included a national cap-and-trade program in the American Clean Energy and Security Act, in the Summer of 2010, although it died after the Republicans regained the US Senate in 2010 (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 37). Also pertaining to the environment, after Trump gutted revisions to the 1970 National Environmental Policy Act (by exempting some major infrastructure projects from environmental review), the Biden administration restored those regulations in April 2022.[120] With regard to automobile regulations, in April 2022, the Biden administration finalized fuel efficiency standards requiring new cars and light trucks to average forty-nine miles per gallon by 2026 (the Trump administration had previously rolled back the fuel efficiency standards set by Obama).[121]

One can also find differences between the parties when it comes to the regulation of oil and gas industries. For instance, regulations placed on the oil industry under Obama, in response to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico (the worst in US history), were later loosened by the Trump administration in May 2019.[122] Under Trump, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also rolled back Obama-era regulations that protected waterways near coal-fired plants from being flooded with toxic coal ash.[123]

Also relevant, after blocking the Keystone XL oil pipeline in 2015, President Obama had successfully blocked the construction of a disputed segment of the Dakota Access Pipeline one month prior to leaving office. However, in January 2017, President Trump allowed the construction of the two pipelines to move forward (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 51). Then, after entering the White House in January of 2021, Joe Biden canceled the Keystone XL pipeline,[124] and halted the extraction of oil and gas from federal lands as part of a broader set of reforms intended to address

[120] Daly, M. (2022, April 19). *Biden restores stricter environmental review of big projects*. AP News. https://apnews.com/article/business-environment-environmental-policy-c8b78dbe6bff473565b75bae3885e774

[121] Democracy Now. (2022, April 4). *U.S. Will Require New Cars to Average 49 MPG by 2026*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/4/4/headlines/us_will_require_new_cars_to_average_49_mpg_by_2026

[122] Wamsley, L. (2019, May 3). *Trump administration Moves to Roll Back Offshore Drilling Safety Regulations*. National Public Radio. https://www.npr.org/2019/05/03/720008093/trump-administration-moves-to-roll-back-offshore-drilling-safety-regulations

[123] Democracy Now. (2020, September 1). *EPA rolls back rule protecting waterways from toxic coal ash*. https://www.democracynow.org/2020/9/1/headlines/epa_rolls_back_rule_protecting_waterways_from_toxic_coal_ash

[124] Davenport, C., & Friedman, L. (2021, January 20). *Biden Rejoins Paris Climate Agreement and Cancels Keystone XL Pipeline*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/20/climate/biden-paris-climate-agreement.html

the climate crisis.[125] The Biden administration also, in May 2022, canceled three oil and gas lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and off the coast of Alaska.[126]

Health Care

Bill Clinton, like Barack Obama after him, attempted to pass a major progressive health care reform (Krugman, 2020, p. 35). After the Affordable Care Act of 2009 ("Obamacare") was passed, the number of uninsured Americans declined from 48 million in 2010 to 28 million in 2016. However, after the US Supreme Court's 2012 ruling on the Sebelius case, Republican-controlled states generally opted out of the Obamacare Medicaid expansion (Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 73). Also, in December 2017, Congressional Republicans repealed the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate. As a result, 22 million Americans are expected to lose coverage by 2026 (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 195). In June 2020, the Trump administration asked the US Supreme Court to overturn the Affordable Care Act,[127] following numerous attempts by congressional Republicans to repeal the legislation.[128] As Krugman (2020, p. 76) observed, "just by capturing the House [in 2018] Democrats achieved one big goal – taking repeal of the Affordable Care Act off the Table." After coming to office in January 2021, Biden reinforced access to health insurance plans after the Trump administration sought to diminish Obamacare.[129]

In 2014, the Obama administration established a National Security Council Directorate for Global Health Security and Biodefense to prepare for disease outbreaks, although that was subsequently disbanded by the Trump administration in 2018, shortly before the COVID-19 outbreak (Laursen, 2021, p. 30). Also in contrast to the Trump administration, Joe Biden asked Americans to wear COVID-19 prevention masks for 100 days, required masks in federal buildings, and created a White House position to improve the government's response to the virus.[130]

Contrasts between Democrats and Republicans in the ideologically expected direction can also be found at the state level. For example, as was mentioned above, Democratic Party-majority states were much more likely than Republican ones to

[125] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2021, January 27). *Biden to sign executive orders of environment*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-55829189

[126] Daly, M. (2022, May 12). *Biden cancels offshore oil lease sales in Gulf Coast, Alaska*. Yahoo News. https://news.yahoo.com/biden-cancels-offshore-oil-lease-155012006.html

[127] Stolberg, S. G. (2020, June 26). *Trump Administration asks Supreme Court to Strike Down Affordable Care Act*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/26/us/politics/obamacare-trump-administration-supreme-court.html

[128] Riotta, C. (2017, July 29). *GOP Aims To Kill Obamacare Yet Again After Failing 70 Times*. Newsweek. https://www.newsweek.com/gop-health-care-bill-repeal-and-replace-70-failed-attempts-643832

[129] Leonhardt, D. (2021, January 29). *Biden's Health Care Moves*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/29/briefing/novavax-vaccine-cicely-tyson-robinhood-gm.html

[130] Leonhardt, D. (2021, January 21). *The Biden administration begins to address the six crises that the new President described in his inaugural address*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/20/climate/biden-paris-climate-agreement.html

adopt the Medicaid expansion advanced under the Affordable Care Act. In the State of New Jersey, after the Republicans succeeded in repealing the Obamacare mandate to purchase insurance, the Democrats gained control of the state government in 2017 and then restored the mandate. As a result, New Jersey now has below-average health care premium costs (Krugman, 2020, pp. 77–78).

Net Neutrality

Another example of policy stances taken in the ideologically expected direction is found on the topic of net neutrality. Net neutrality is the idea that internet service providers should not apply different price rates based on factors such as the type of content or website used. Polls have found strong bipartisan support for net neutrality among the American public, with 87% of Democrats in favor and 77% of Republicans.[131] Among political leaders, Democrats tend to be stronger supporters than Republicans. For instance, after President Obama had approved a net neutrality protection bill, it was revoked by President Trump and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 2017. In July 2021, President Biden signed an executive order to restore net neutrality, although the FCC cannot act on that order until the Senate approves a fifth FCC commissioner.[132]

Constitutional Rights and Liberties

Policing and Criminal Procedure

Policy outcomes in the ideologically expected direction can also be found in the area of constitutional rights and liberties. On the topic of domestic law and order, for example, President Obama placed limits on how local police departments could use military weapons in 2015, but President Trump later overturned most of these restrictions.[133] In the context of the widespread protests following the police killing of George Floyd, under Democratic Party leadership, the New York State Assembly passed legislation (over Republican Party opposition) banning police chokeholds, making it easier to sue people who call police on others without good reason, and setting up a special prosecutor's office to investigate deaths, which occur during

[131] Birnbaum, E. (2019, March 20). *4 in 5 Americans say they support net neutrality: poll*. The Hill. https://thehill.com/policy/technology/435009-4-in-5-americans-say-they-support-net-neutrality-poll

[132] Rivero, N. (2021, July 11). *Biden's executive order will restore net neutrality – if Congress cooperates*. Quartz. https://qz.com/2031469/bidens-executive-order-will-probably-restore-net-neutrality/

[133] British Broadcasting Corporation. (n.d.). *George Floyd death: Seven solutions to US police problems*. Retrieved June 9, 2020, from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52981634

police encounters.[134] Meanwhile, executive action against white-collar crime (i.e., crimes involving tax, securities, bankruptcy, health care, antitrust, or federal procurement laws) declined sharply under the Trump administration (Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 158).

As another example of partisan distinction, the Department of Justice under the Obama administration established an Office for Access to Justice, promoting legal counsel for juvenile and indigent defendants, to help them understand their rights in the civil and criminal legal system. That office was shut down during the Trump administration but later restored under Biden by Attorney General Merrick Garland in October 2021.[135] Shortly after entering the White House in January 2021, Biden issued the following executive orders to address racial inequalities: (i) the Department of Justice must end its contracts with private prisons, (ii) the Department of Housing and Urban Development must end racially discriminatory federal housing policies, (iii) commitment to respecting and reinforcing tribal sovereignty, and (iv) combating xenophobia against Asian Americans.[136]

With regard to capital punishment, by August 2019, all twenty Democratic Party presidential primary candidates had taken stances in opposition to the death penalty, while the Trump administration had just weeks earlier announced the restart of the federal death penalty.[137] At the state-level, in December 2022, Oregon's Democratic Governor Kate Brown commuted seventeen death sentences over Republican Party opposition.[138] Across the USA, there appears to be a correlation with Democratic-leaning states more likely to have abolished the death penalty.[139]

[134] Associated Press. (2020, June 12). *Cuomo signs police accountability legislation*. WRVO public media. https://www.wrvo.org/post/cuomo-signs-police-accountability-legislation

[135] Karp, J. (2021, October 29). *Garland to reopen DOJ Office for Access to Justice*. Law360. https://www.law360.com/access-to-justice/articles/1436003/garland-to-reopen-doj-office-for-access-to-justice

[136] Democracy Now. (2021, January 27). *Biden Orders DOJ to End Contracts with Private Prisons, HUD to End Discrimination in Housing*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/1/27/headlines/biden_orders_doj_to_end_contracts_with_private_prisons_hud_to_end_discrimination_in_housing

[137] Segura, L. (2019, July 29). *With Federal Executions Looming, the Democrats' Death Penalty Legacy is Coming Back to Haunt Us*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2019/07/29/death-penalty-federal-executions/

[138] Matza, M. (2022, December 14). *Oregon governor commutes all 17 of state's death sentences*. British Broadcasting Corporation. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-63967485

[139] Murphy, J. (2022, October 27). *Map: These are the states that allow the death penalty*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/all/map-these-are-states-allow-death-penalty-n1282556

Civil Liberties and Workers' Rights

As another example of partisan division in the ideologically expected direction, after coming to office in January 2021, Biden reversed Trump's transgender military ban.[140] Also, in December 2022, the Democratic Party majority Congress passed a bill protecting gay marriage, while most Republicans voted against the legislation.[141] At the state level, in January 2019 a pro-choice bill was approved in the New York State Senate shortly after the Democratic Party gained a majority in the chamber, after which the bill was signed into law by Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo.[142] In October 2021, the Biden administration also reversed a Trump-era ban that prevented federally funded family planning clinics from referring patients for abortions.[143] Furthermore, the US Supreme Court ruling ensuring abortion rights in the first trimester (Roe v. Wade, 1973) was overturned in June 2022 by a pro-life majority on the Court, including three right-wing justices appointed by President Trump.

Continuing with the topic of civil liberties, Biden rescinded exemptions granted by the Trump administration, which allowed taxpayer-funded foster care agencies to discriminate against potential foster parents based on their religious beliefs.[144] Furthermore, in November 2021, Biden's Department of Labor announced that it was going to rescind a Trump administration rule allowing federal contractors to discriminate against workers and job applicants in the name of religious freedom.[145] It has also been argued that Biden's selection of Jennifer Abruzzo for the head of the National Relations Labor Board (NLRB) made it possible for Amazon workers in Staten Island to unionize in April 2022.[146]

Another policy area exhibiting partisan polarization is election administration reform, with Democratic administrations tending to support measures making it

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[140] Bennett, G., & Edelman, A. (2021, January 25). *Biden reverses Trump's transgender military ban*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/biden-reverse-trump-s-transgender-military-ban-n1255522

[141] Kapur, S., & Stewart, K. (2022, December 8). *House passes bill to protect same-sex marriage, sending it to Biden's desk*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/house-passes-bill-protect-sex-marriage-sending-bidens-desk-rcna60128

[142] Precious, T. (2019, January 22). *Long-stalled abortion bill passes New York Legislature*. Buffalo News. https://buffalonews.com/2019/01/22/long-stalled-abortion-bill-passes-new-york-legislature/

[143] Democracy Now. (2021, October 5). *Biden reverses Trump-era domestic gag rule on Title X family planning clinics*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/10/5/headlines/biden_reverses_trump_era_domestic_gag_rule_on_title_x_family_planning_clinics

[144] Americans United for Separation of Church and State. (2021, November 18). *Americans United Applauds Biden Administration for Rescinding Trump-Era Exemptions*. https://www.au.org/media/press-releases/HHS-Foster-Care-Waivers

[145] Sokol, S. (2021, November 9). *President Biden Acts to Restore Religious Freedom by Rescinding Trump-Era Labor Rule*. Americans United for Separation of Church and State. https://www.au.org/blogs/biden-labor-rule

[146] Grim, R. (2022, April 22). *Biden's NLRB was Essential to Unionizing the Amazon Warehouse in Staten Island*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2022/04/22/amazon-warehouse-union-biden-nlrb/

easier for lower-class citizens to cast a ballot, while Republicans have tended to oppose such measures. For example, during the Clinton presidency, the Justice Department sued several states for failure to enforce the National Voter Registration Act. By contrast, during the George W. Bush presidency, the Justice Department prioritized "fraud prevention" over enfranchisement and thus clamped-down on voter registration drives (James, 2012, pp. 117–8). Since 2010, Republican Party-controlled state governments have tended to support restrictive voter ID laws, obstacles to voter registration, and limited early and absentee voting options (Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 180).

Immigrant Rights

One can also find stances in the ideologically expected direction of immigration policy. For instance, Trump sought to end the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which protected "Dreamers" – that is, undocumented youths brought to the USA as children.[147] Also, after coming to office in January 2021, Biden reversed Trump's "Muslim and Africa ban" which prohibited visitors from some Muslim-majority countries such as Iran, Libya, Somalia, and Syria.[148] Biden also reversed some of Trump's anti-immigration policies, for instance, by refocusing deportation efforts on undocumented immigrants who committed crimes in the USA, rather than those who only entered the country illegally.[149]

In addition, Biden set up a task force to try to reunite the estimated 600–700 children separated from their families after trying to cross the US-Mexico border.[150] The task force released a progress report in June 2021 stating that it will allow some migrant parents to enter the USA for a period of thirty-six months.[151] In early May of 2021, the Biden administration also announced it would cancel construction of Trump's US-Mexico border wall.[152] Furthermore, in April 2022, the Department of Homeland Security under the Biden administration announced it would offer

[147] British Broadcasting Corporation. (n.d.). *Trump's bid to end Obama-era immigration policy ruled unlawful*. Retrieved June 18, 2020, from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53096887

[148] Mansoor, S. (2021, January 21). *Activists Praise Biden's Reversal of Trump-Era "Discriminatory" Travel Ban. But the Work Isn't Over Yet*. Time. https://time.com/5932143/biden-ends-muslim-african-ban/

[149] Borger, J. (2021, February 1). *US to resume deporting asylum seekers after judge rejects Bidenorder*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/feb/01/us-immigration-deportations-ice-biden-administration

[150] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2021, February 2). *Biden signs orders on migrant family separations and asylum*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-55913215

[151] Barros, A. (2021, June 11). *Biden administration to Bring Parents of Separated Migrant Children Back to US*. Voice Of America. https://www.voanews.com/usa/immigration/biden-administration-bring-parents-separated-migrant-children-back-us

[152] Democracy Now. (2021, May 3). *Biden Admin cancels construction of Trump U.S.-Mexico Border Wall*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/5/3/headlines/biden_admin_cancels_construction_of_trump_us_mexico_border_wall

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to more than 10,000 Cameroonian immigrants in the USA, protecting them from deportation to life-threatening conditions.[153] On June 30, 2022, the US Supreme Court majority in Biden v. Texas allowed the Biden administration to overturn Trump's "remain in Mexico" policy, which required asylum seekers to await their court hearings from outside of the USA.[154]

Foreign Policy

Public Health Cooperation

Partisan distinction can also be found in the foreign policy domain. For example, after coming to office in January 2021, Biden reversed Trump's effort to withdraw the USA from the World Health Organization.[155] In 2021, under the Biden administration, the USA joined the international vaccine-sharing scheme Covax[156] and pledged to donate 500 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to poorer nations.[157] Trump's ban on federal funds for abortion-performing international aid groups was also overturned by the Biden administration.[158]

Environmental Treaties

With regard to international environmental treaties, one finds a clear partisan pattern as well. Under President Bill Clinton (a Democrat), the USA initially signed the Kyoto Protocol – promoting solutions to climate change – in 1998,[159] but later

[153] Montoya-Galvez, C. (2022, April 15). *Biden administration protects Cameroonians in the U.S. from deportation, offers work permits*. CBS News. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/biden-cameroon-immigrants-temporary-protected-status-deportation-work-permits/

[154] Montoya-Galvez, C. (2022, June 30). *Supreme Court says Biden can end "Remain in Mexico" rule for asylum seekers*. CBS News. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/supreme-court-remain-in-mexico-case-biden-v-texas/

[155] Weintraub, K. (2021, January 22). *Biden administration renewed support for World Health Organization*. USA Today. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2021/01/22/scientists-applaud-biden-decision-rejoin-world-health-organization/4243377001/

[156] Safi, M. (2021, January 21). *Fauci: US to repeal anti-abortion rule on aid and join Covax vaccine scheme*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/21/fauci-us-repeal-anti-abortion-rule-aid-join-covax-vaccine-scheme

[157] Democracy Now. (2021, June 10). *Biden Set to Announce U.S. Donation of 500 Million COVID-19 Vaccine Doses to Poorer Nations*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/6/10/headlines/biden_set_to_announce_us_donation_of_500_million_covid_19_vaccine_doses_to_poorer_nations

[158] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2021, January 28). *Biden reverses global abortion "gag rule" and expands Obamacare*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-55844717

[159] Environmental Defense Fund. (1998, November 12). *President Clinton Signs Climate Treaty*. https://www.edf.org/news/president-clinton-signs-climate-treaty

withdrew under President George W. Bush (a Republican).[160] Similarly, under President Obama (a Democrat), the USA signed the Paris Agreement in 2015[161] but was later withdrawn under President Trump (a Republican) in 2017.[162] After entering the White House in January 2021, Biden rejoined the Paris Agreement.[163]

Weapons Treaties

Differences between the parties are also apparent on the topic of weapons treaties. For example, the Trump administration planned to loosen landmine restrictions by overturning Obama's 2014 executive order, which limited US landmine usage to the Korean Peninsula.[164] Trump also "unsigned" the USA from the United Nations (UN) Arms Trade Treaty previously signed by Obama in 2014.[165] Meanwhile, Biden restored an Obama-era nuclear arms treaty that had been agreed to with Russia and thus helped to avoid an arms race.[166]

The War on Terror and Human Rights

Other partisan differences can be found in the area of US military operations. Early in his first presidential term, Donald Trump gave directives to his military and spy chiefs which "loosened rules of engagement introduced during the Obama administration to reduce civilian casualties, expanded the authority of battlefield

[160] Beggin, R. (2017, June 1). *The last time a US President dumped a global climate deal*. ABC News. https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/time-us-president-dumped-global-climate-deal/story

[161] Sutter, J. D., & Berlinger, J. (2015, December 14). *Obama: Climate agreement "best chance we have" to save the planet*. CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2015/12/12/world/global-climate-change-conference-vote/index.html

[162] Kann, D. (2019, November 4). *US begins formal withdrawal from Paris climate accord*. CNN. https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/04/politics/trump-formal-withdrawal-paris-climate-agreement/index.html

[163] Davenport, C., & Friedman, L. (2021, January 20). *Biden Rejoins Paris Climate Agreement and Cancels Keystone XL Pipeline*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/20/climate/biden-paris-climate-agreement.html

[164] Johnson, J. (2020, January 30). *"Absolutely Horrific": Trump Preparing to Roll Back Restrictions on US Military Use of Landmines*. Common Dreams. https://www.commondreams.org/news/2020/01/30/absolutely-horrific-trump-preparing-roll-back-restrictions-us-military-use-landmines

[165] Chappell, B. (2019, April 26). *Trump Moves to Withdraw U.S. from U.N. Arms Trade Treaty*. National Public Radio. https://www.npr.org/2019/04/26/717547741/trump-moves-to-withdraw-u-s-from-u-n-arms-trade-treaty

[166] Sanger, D. E., & Troianovski, A. (2021, January 26). *Biden and Putin Agree to Extend Nuclear Treaty*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/26/world/europe/biden-putin-nuclear-treaty.html. Trump had initially declared he would not extend the treaty unless China joined. The extension does not cover tactical nuclear weapons and does not reverse Trump's decision to pull out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Agreement.

commanders, and deployed 3,000 more American troops."[167] Also, according to Nick Turse, writing for *The Intercept*, US airstrikes in Somalia increased under the Trump administration during the coronavirus outbreak:

> Since the beginning of [2020], AFRICOM has announced 39 airstrikes in Somalia. The command announced a total of 36 such attacks from 2009 to 2017, under Obama, peaking in 2016 with 19 declared airstrikes. Last year, under President Donald Trump, the U.S. conducted 63 air attacks in Somalia, the most ever in a single year.[168]

Also in the expected direction, in January 2018, Trump signed an executive order to keep the Guantanamo Bay prison open, nullifying Obama's executive order to close it down.[169]

Turning to Israel-Palestine relations, in 2016, the UN Security Council was able to pass a resolution condemning Israel's illegal settlements in the West Bank, after the Obama administration chose to abstain rather than veto the resolution (Dille, 2019, p. 184). Also, President Biden reversed a Trump policy by restoring aid to the Palestinians in April 2021.[170] That same month, Biden also ended the sanctions placed on the International Criminal Court (ICC) by Trump to pressure the court to not investigate alleged US and Israeli crimes.[171] More generally, there appears to be a partisan pattern toward the ICC, with Clinton signing the Treaty of Rome statute (which established the court) on December 31, 2000, George W. Bush then "unsigning" the treaty and working to exempt American nationals from ICC jurisdiction, followed by the Obama administration softening the US stance toward the court (although still not re-signing the treaty) (Frieden et al., 2019, pp. 535–6).

Relations with Nonaligned States

With regard to US relations with nonaligned states, in 2014, President Obama attempted to restore some diplomatic and economic ties with Cuba, but steps to end the embargo were reversed by President Trump after coming to power in 2017

[167] Quilty, A. (2019, October 30). *A CIA-backed militia targeted clinics in Afghanistan, killing medical workers and civilians*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2019/10/30/afghanistan-health-clinics-airstrikes-taliban/

[168] Turse, N. (2020, April 22). *U.S. Airstrikes Hit All-Time High As Coronavirus Spreads in Somalia*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2020/04/22/coronavirus-somalia-airstrikes/

[169] Despite his effort to close the Guantanamo Bay prison, Obama did not propose ending indefinite detention, but rather to move the detainees to a SuperMax prison in the USA. Thus, although this is not a clear-cut distinction between Obama and Trump, the contrasting executive orders are in the expected ideological directions. Hudson, A. (2019, July 30). *The 2020 Candidates Are Ignoring Guantánamo*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/the-2020-candidates-are-ignoring-guantanamo/

[170] Verma, P., & Gladstone, R. (2021, April 7). *Reversing Trump, Biden Restores Aid to Palestinians*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/07/world/middleeast/biden-aid-palestinians.html

[171] Corbett, J. (2021, April 2). *Critical First Step But Long Overdue: Biden Repeals Trump Sanctions on the ICC*. Common Dreams. https://www.commondreams.org/news/2021/04/02/critical-first-step-long-overdue-biden-repeals-trump-sanctions-icc

(Frieden et al., 2019, p. 161). The Trump administration also classified Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism, reversing Obama's removal of Cuba from the list in 2015.[172] In May 2022, Biden eased financial, travel, and migration rules on Cuba and allowed Chevron to discuss future work with the Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA.[173]

Also in the ideologically expected direction, in 2017, Trump used an executive order to unravel the Iran Nuclear Deal – the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action (JCPOA) – signed under the Obama administration.[174] In January 2021, Biden's Secretary of State Anthony Blinken suggested an openness to reentering the Iran nuclear deal. As of May 2022, talks to revive the JCPOA had been stalled in part due to opposition from the Republican US Senate majority.[175] In February 2021, the Biden administration reversed the designation of Yemen's Houthi rebels as a terrorist organization, making it easier to provide aid to the country.[176] In January 2021, Biden also ceased support for offensive operations by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates against Yemen, including by discontinuing the sale of precision-guided munitions to the countries.[177]

In Sum: Partisan Division in US Politics

The foregoing survey of US politics is consistent with the prevailing pluralist theoretic view emphasizing partisan polarization and genuine electoral choice between parties. Indeed, political stances and outcomes in the ideologically expected direction appear to be most common in US politics. As Schubert, Dye, and Zeigler (2014, p. 202) observe, "roll-call voting follows party lines more often than […] any other divisions that have been studied." However, there are also many examples of the Democratic Party aligning with the Republican Party, often against the preferences of their own voters, on the right side of the political spectrum. I turn next to a review of such

[172] Williams, A. (2021, January 11). *U.S. declared Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/u-s-declares-cuba-state-sponsor-terrorism-n1253770

[173] Nelson, S. (2022, May 17). *Biden to ease Venezuela sanctions one day after Cuba rules lift*. The New York Post. https://nypost.com/2022/05/17/biden-eases-venezuela-sanctions-one-day-after-cuba-rules-lift/

[174] Baker, P. (2017, October 13). *Trump Adopts Obama Approach While Seeking to Undo a Legacy*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/13/us/politics/trump-obama-executive-orders.html

[175] Motamedi, M. (2022, May 7). *Iran confirms EU envoy visit to save stalled nuclear deal talks*. Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/7/iran-confirms-eu-envoy-visit-to-save-stalled-nuclear-deal-talks

[176] Jakes, L., & Schmitt, E. (2021, February 5). *Biden Reverses Trump Terrorist Designation for Houthis in Yemen*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/05/us/politics/biden-houthi-yemen-terrorist-designation.html

[177] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2021, February 4). *Yemen War: Joe Biden ends support for operations in foreign policy reset*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-55941588

stances in the ideologically *un*expected direction, which arguably reveal an elite-mass division behind the scenery of partisan polarization. In the following discussion, I will use the term bipartisan neoliberalism loosely in reference to neoliberal as well as conservative positions, which often (though not always) align with the former.[178]

6.4 The Elite-Class View: Bipartisan Neoliberalism

Rightward Shift in the USA: The General Context

The Republican Party Leads the Way

According to Wendy Brown (2019, p. 18), neoliberalism spread from Chile (with the rise of Pinochet in 1973), to other countries in the Global South, then to the USA and Britain, followed by other parts of Western Europe and, after the fall of the Soviet Union, to Eastern Europe as well. A key moment within that longer-term diffusion was the election of British premier Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and US president Ronald Reagan in 1980, which set the stage for a definitive paradigm shift toward neoliberalism (Levy et al., 1997; Campbell, 1998; Sisson & Hartmann,

[178] Although both conservatism and neoliberalism are right-leaning ideologies, one can identify both overlap and distinction between them. Conservatives tend to favor domestic "law and order" over civil rights, both to prevent socialism and defend property rights (economic reasons) and, less explicitly, to maintain white supremacy (cultural reasons). Neoliberalism also permits the violation of domestic rights to prevent the spread of socialism (e.g., the Pinochet regime in Chile) but is less concerned about preserving white supremacy. There is substantial overlap between conservatism and neoliberalism on domestic economic policy, with both favoring privatization and/or spending cuts on domestic goods and services (e.g., health care, education, infrastructure) and deregulation of the financial and industrial sectors (even at the expense of the environment). More generally, both camps permit high levels of inequality and precarity as workforce incentives in a market-based economy. With regard to foreign policy, stances toward US empire are a bit more nuanced. Among conservatives, there are the pro-empire "neo-cons" (who favored the 2003 Iraq invasion, for example, and exhibit a realist outlook when it comes to the containment of adversaries such as Iran). However, there are also conservative "America First" populists who are more isolationist in outlook. Like neoconservatism, neoliberalism is pro-US empire, but for economic reasons (i.e., promoting capitalism and deterring socialism) rather than culturally conservative reasons (e.g., a "clash of civilizations" between Judeo-Christian and Muslim countries). Perhaps the clearest difference between conservatism and neoliberalism concerns open borders, with conservatives being more anti-immigration and pro-trade protectionism (especially "America First" populists), while neoliberals (like economic liberals more generally) tend to be anti-protectionism and open to economic migration (although some neoliberals such as Milton Friedman have favored limiting migration to curb domestic welfare spending [Caplan & Weinersmith, 2019, p. 57]).

2014, p. 220).[179] According to Przeworski (2019, p. 111), the great compromise of the Fordist era between organized labor and business interests "was shattered in the United Kingdom and the United States by the respective victories of Thatcher and Reagan, whose first targets were the unions."

In the USA, the current era of neoliberalism and its associated policy problems (see this chapter's initial review of the policy landscape) are often associated with Republican Party presidents Ronald Reagan (1981–1989), George H.W. Bush (1989–1993), George W. Bush (2001–2009), and Donald Trump (2017–2020), and Republican Party congressional majorities such as that elected in 1994 led by Newt Gingrich. For example, Reagan's presidency is often associated with deregulating the financial sector,[180] cutting back on social welfare benefits,[181] and taking an adversarial stance toward labor unions (notably, the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization).[182] Also, "The top federal income tax rate, which had averaged 81% from 1932 to 1980, was cut to 28% by the 1986 tax reform, the quintessential Reagan-era reform" (Piketty, 2020, p. 834).

According to Hacker and Pierson (2020, pp. 50–65), the Republican Party fully embraced plutocracy following the 1994 midterm elections and during the George W. Bush administration, promoting widespread deregulation, as well as cuts in the capital gains, gift, dividend, top rate, and estate taxes. Later, during the Trump presidency, aside from Trump's positions on trade and immigration, which were "clearly at odds with the preferences of the GOP establishment," Trump was "essentially handing over the administrative apparatus to the plutocratic and business interests"

[179] Early signs of neoliberalism in the USA include the introduction of University of California tuition fees under then Governor Ronald Reagan (1967–1975), and the passage of Proposition 13 in California in 1978 limiting property tax revenues to public schools. According to Wetzel (2022, p. 109), "One of the earliest initiatives of the 'neo-liberal' corporate offensive of the last four decades was the drive in the late 1970s to abolish the [Interstate Commerce Commission] and de-regulate the trucking and airline industry." Wolin (2008, p. 221) identifies neoliberalism's origin even further back, describing it "as the New Deal's residuary legatee [which] found its icon in JFK. Its proponents were willing to sacrifice some elements of social democracy in order to promote a 'strong state' for opposing Soviet communism abroad."

[180] For instance, in 1982, Reagan-appointed Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) chairman John Shad removed restrictions on stock buybacks, previously regarded by the SEC as a potential means for stock manipulation and fraud (Reich, 2015, p. 101). For a detailed timeline of financial deregulation in the housing sector, including during the Reagan years, see: Prins, N. (2008, July/August). *Where Credit Is Due: A Timeline of the Mortgage Crisis*. Mother Jones. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2008/07/where-credit-due-timeline-mortgage-crisis/

[181] For a detailed summary, see: Pear, R. (1982, August 25). *Reagan's Social Impact; News Analysis*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/1982/08/25/us/reagan-s-social-impact-news-analysis.html

[182] McCartin, J. A. (2011, August 2). *The Strike That Busted Unions*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/03/opinion/reagan-vs-patco-the-strike-that-busted-unions.html. According to Robert Reich (2015, p. 129), "Ronald Reagan's notorious firing of the nation's air traffic controllers for going on strike […] signaled to the nation's large employers that America had embarked on a different era of labor relations."

(Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 154). For example, "The federal corporate tax rate, which had been 35% since 1993, was abruptly cut to 21% in 2018, with an amnesty on profits repatriated from abroad […] Trump also sought complete elimination of the progressive tax on inheritances, but Congress refused" (Piketty, 2020, p. 889). According to Inglehart (2018, p. 211), "Trump's policies of deregulating the financial sector, cutting medical coverage and reducing taxes on the very rich are the opposite of what is needed by the people who have been left behind. They will make America great for billionaires who pay no income tax."

The Democratic Party Shifts to the Right

However, the current policy landscape also evolved under Democratic Party leadership in the executive and legislative branches at the national and subnational levels. While Republicans became sharply more conservative since the 1980s, no comparable leftward movement can be seen among Democrats. Democrats moved left on many social issues, but right on economic issues such as Wall Street regulations, defense of labor unions, and social program funding (Hacker & Pierson, 2020, pp. 59–60). For instance, although Reagan had drastically cut the federal income tax rate, "Bill Clinton (1992–2000) and Barack Obama (2008–2016), never made any real attempt to revise the narrative or reverse the policies of the 1980s" (Piketty, 2020, p. 835).

More generally, recent research has found that both Democratic and Republican Party leaders contributed to the current level of economic inequality in the USA (Hacker & Pierson, 2010) and that legislators from both parties tend to be more responsive to elite than to average citizen interests (Bartels, 2008; Hayes, 2013; Gilens & Page, 2014).[183] According to Inglehart (2018, p. 210), "There is a widespread feeling that neither major party is effectively representing the interests of most people – and it is well-founded. The American economy is being hollowed out and job security is fading." Reich (2015, p. 145) observes that "[Both Democrats and Republicans] have been complicit in this great wealth transfer, but Republicans have encouraged it more ardently than Democrats."

In the area of public administration, the spread of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) "New Public Management" principles in

[183] Expanding on the study by Gilens and Page (2014), Grossman and Isaac (n.d.) find that the disproportionate influence of affluent Americans is especially pronounced on questions of foreign policy, and in blocking high profile radical reforms favored by the majority. An underrepresentation of the poor was already apparent after Clinton came to office in 1994, as Solomon (1994, p. 34) explains: "In the battles between elite factions (sometimes referred to as influential Democrats and Republicans), poor people are – more than ever – virtually ignored in national politics."

Europe is also often associated with neoliberalism.[184] June Sekera (2016, p. 18) provides the following overview of the rise of New Public Management in the USA under the leadership of both parties:

> While elements of marketization began to appear in the U.S. government under the Carter administration [1976–1980], the creed of market superiority, in tandem with the belief that government was 'the problem, not the solution,' lay at the heart of the agenda of the succeeding Reagan administration, which established the foundation for New Public Management through a host of new administration rules and procedures. Subsequently, broad-based market-centric values and norms, as well as additional specific practices, were instilled and installed by the Clinton/Gore administration through its 'National Performance Review' initiative, otherwise known as 'Reinventing Government'.

What follows is a general survey of examples indicating the broader rightward shift in the policies of recent Democratic Party presidents, beginning with the Carter administration. That will be followed by a review of some examples from the US Congress and the subnational level. The discussion draws upon examples of both conservative and neoliberal right-wing policy stances to illustrate how the Democrats have contributed to the current policy landscape and its ongoing stability.

The Carter Presidency (1976–1980)

Early signs of the transition from the post-World War II "Keynesian consensus" (characterized by regulation [e.g., of bank activities], mixed economies, deficit spending, limited foreign ownership, and strong labor unions) toward the current era of neoliberalism (characterized by deregulation, privatization, austerity, trade and investment liberalization, and weak labor unions) were already apparent during the presidency of Democrat Jimmy Carter. Paul Street (2014, p. 203) describes the Carter administration as a "corporatist presidency, itself a fitting prelude to the neoliberal Democratic administrations of Bill Clinton and Barack Obama." Indicative of the shift toward neoliberalism in domestic policy during the Carter administration, Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker (1975–1979) advanced strong

[184] According to comparative political scientist José Magone (2019, pp. 169–72), "From the 1970s, the OECD developed benchmarking and best practices for public administration based on the principles of new public management. At the forefront was a transition from a Weberian model of civil service and public administration to the new public management model." This new style of governance was characterized by the privatization of public services, as well as the introduction of commercial principles in the provision of services increasingly provided via public-private partnerships. Another characteristic of this new administrative style was the establishment of special independent bodies to either regulate or perform duties previously carried out by the state. Examples in Europe include, in the UK, Ofcom (which exercised control over the communications sector) and the Rail and Road Authority, and in Germany the *Bundesnetzagentur* (responsible for several utility services).

monetarist measures against inflation, especially by raising the interest rate.[185] Also, Noam Chomsky (1991, p. 26) observed that, in the context of the Cold War, "President Carter proposed a substantial increase in military spending and a cutback on social programs. These proposals were implemented by the Reagan Administration."

We can also find examples of right-wing foreign policy in the Carter administration. For example, confirming US support for Saudi Arabia, following the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Carter articulated what come to be known as the Carter doctrine, stating that "Any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force" (Frieden et al., p. 2019, p. 142).

In *False Hope*, Norman Solomon (1994, pp. 80–82) reviews the imperialistic foreign policies advanced under the Carter administration, including the advancement of new nuclear weapons systems, and military support for right-wing dictatorships in Indonesia (which carried out a "wholesale murder of Timorese civilians"), El Salvador (despite pleas from Archbishop Oscar Romero, assassinated in March of 1980), Nicaragua (where "Carter supported dictator Anastasio Somoza virtually to the end of his bloody rule"), and Guatemala (where "U.S. military aid to the mass murderers never ceased during the Carter years").

The Clinton Presidency (1993–2000)

General Shift to Right

As was mentioned above, Republican Party presidents, beginning with Ronald Reagan, are normally associated with the rise of the neoliberal paradigm in the USA. However, Democratic president Bill Clinton also advanced the neoliberal agenda in ways. In the early years of the Clinton presidency, Norman Solomon (1994, p. 125) wrote, "While the White House is less mean-spirited under Clinton than it was under [Republican President George H.W.] Bush, the continuity between administrations is profound." Former US Army Officer and West Point Historian Danny Sjursen observes that, during the Clinton presidency, "The rich became

[185] Raising the interest rate was similarly endorsed by the "Chicago Boys" (a group of neoclassical economists from the University of Chicago) and adopted by the Pinochet government in Chile in the late 1970s to bring down inflation rates. Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Neoliberalism*. Retrieved December 25, 2019, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoliberalism#Chile. The relationship between interest rate policy and economic liberalism is somewhat ambiguous, however. For example, in the first few years following September 11, 2001, Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan *lowered* the interest rate in part to promote a surge in home sales and refinancing. While Greenspan expressed some doubt about the effect of such decisions on the 2008 crisis, other economic liberals saw a link between the two. Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Alan Greenspan*. Retrieved August 22, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Greenspan

richer, the poor poorer, and through a slew of neoliberal policies, Clinton managed to cede victory to the prevalent ideas of the conservative right."[186]

Economic Policy

In some ways, Clinton carried over the fiscal conservatism of his Republican predecessors. Solomon (1994, p. 30) summarizes the beginning of Clinton's presidency as follows: "As he got acclimated to the Oval Office, Clinton showed himself willing time and again to kiss the rings of 'deficit-cutters,' while budgets shredded dreams of a new direction for the country. With little debate in the mass media […] the theology of slashing government budgets to decrease social spending is no longer just the Republican credo." Clinton's commitment to reducing the federal budget deficit was also preferred by Wall Street's bond traders (Reich, 2015, p. 174). Meanwhile, Clinton's push for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) were arguably indicative of his tendency to respond to business interests (Solomon, 1994, p. 139; Reich, 2015, p. 174).

In the domestic policy arena, Clinton contributed to the deregulation of the financial sector, especially through the Interstate Banking and Branching Efficiency Act in 1994 (eliminating restrictions on interstate banking), the repeal of the Glass Steagall Act in 1999 (which had separated commercial from investment banking), and the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000 (preventing the Commodity Futures Trading Commission from regulating derivatives such as credit default swaps) (Reich, 2015, pp. 174–5). Clinton thus helped set the stage for the 2008–09 financial crisis.[187]

As was mentioned by June Sekera (2016, p. 18) in the quote included above, Clinton also helped to promote the transition in public administration toward the neoliberal principles of New Public Management with his Reinventing Government initiative. With regard to health care, despite broad public support for a single-payer insurance system in the early-1990s, the Clinton administration did not seriously consider the idea, as it would have required new taxes and regulations contrary to his "New Democrat" philosophy (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000, pp. 79–81). On the topic of taxation, "By 1997, congressional Republicans had pressured Clinton into

[186] Sjursen, D. (2019, July 20). *American History for Truthdiggers: Bill Clinton, the "New Democrat"*. Truth Dig. https://www.truthdig.com/articles/american-history-for-truthdiggers-bill-clinton-the-new-democrat/

[187] Some pro-market libertarians blame the 2008–09 financial crisis on the Federal Reserve's lowering of the interest rate after September 11, 2001, on the grounds that this contributed to excessive borrowing and fueled the housing bubble. However, it is equally (if not more) plausible that the financial crisis was caused by deregulation of the financial sector and subsequent trading of lucrative financial products such as collateralized debt obligations and credit default swaps, which spread systemic risk domestically and internationally (Johnson & Kwak, 2010).

backing […] huge new tax cuts for the affluent, including a near-doubling of the amount rich Americans could pass to their heirs tax-free" (Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 53).

Also noteworthy, in 1996, Clinton signed a bill replacing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with the more neoliberal, "welfare-to-work" style Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), thus reducing government benefits to poor families (Piston, 2018, p. 8). According to Clinton's former Labor Secretary Robert Reich (2015, p. 138), "Bill Clinton's welfare reform of 1996 pushed the poor off welfare and into work, but the work available to them has provided low wages and offered few ladders into the middle class."

Constitutional Rights and Liberties

On the topic of constitutional rights and liberties, critics of President Clinton sometimes remind us that he signed the 1994 Crime Bill, which reinforced (if not directly contributed to) mass incarceration at subnational levels[188] and set the stage for a new wave of federal executions.[189] Clinton also contributed to police militarization in the 1990s with the National Defense Authorization Act, which, among other things, created the 1033 program through which police departments are given surplus military equipment."[190]

Clinton also moved to the right on some civil rights issues. For example, Clinton embraced the repressive "don't ask, don't tell" rule for gay men and lesbians in the armed forces (Solomon, 1994, p. 48). With regard to the rights of African Americans, Solomon (1994, p. 120) recounts some of Clinton's early stances as follows:

> To show toughness on crime, [Clinton] executed Rickey Ray Rector, a brain-damaged black man who seemed unaware that death was permanent. To neutralize the black left, Mr. Clinton scolded Jesse Jackson from Mr. Jackson's own podium at the Rainbow Coalition in Washington. This angered even Mr. Jackson's detractors, who saw it for the spanking-the-blacks routine that it was. During the Los Angeles riots, Mr. Clinton managed so feeble a response that he sounded like George Bush. As a candidate, Mr. Clinton condemned Mr. Bush's policy of forcing boatloads of refugees back to Haiti, and praised the court that found that approach illegal. As president, Mr. Clinton embraced the policy he'd criticized.

President Clinton also expressed support for a conservative immigration agenda in his 1995 State of the Union address: "[O]ur administration has moved aggressively to secure our borders more by hiring a record number of new border guards, by

[188] Lopez, G. (2019, June 20). *The controversial 1994 crime law that Joe Biden helped write, explained*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/6/20/18677998/joe-biden-1994-crime-bill-law-mass-incarceration

[189] Segura, L. (2019, July 29). *With Federal Executions Looming, the Democrats' Death Penalty Legacy is Coming Back to Haunt Us*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2019/07/29/death-penalty-federal-executions/

[190] Kovalik, D. (2020, June 15). *The Military Must be De-Funded Along with the Police*. Counter Punch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/06/15/the-military-must-be-de-funded-along-with-the-police/

deporting twice as many criminal aliens as ever before, by cracking down on illegal hiring, by barring welfare benefits to illegal aliens."[191] According to history teacher and writer Michelle Chan, laws passed during the Clinton presidency set the stage for immigration policies carried out by subsequent presidents, including Donald Trump.[192] Clinton also advanced proposals to restrict asylum rights for refugees (Solomon, 1994, p. 126).

Foreign Policy

In the foreign policy domain, the Clinton administration promoted NATO's expansion into eastern Europe, a move US diplomat George Kennan warned would be a "fateful error" inflaming anti-Westernism in Russia.[193] The Clinton administration also led a 1999 NATO bombing campaign in Serbia and Kosovo, which killed up to 1500 civilians and provided military aid to Kosovo Liberation Army leader Hashim Thaci who was indicted for war crimes by an international tribunal in The Hague in June 2020.[194]

After the Persian Gulf War was concluded under President George H.W. Bush in 1991, Clinton imposed economic sanctions on Iraq, which, according to a World Health Organization report released in 1996, killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children. In 1998, the UN humanitarian coordinator for Iraq, Denis Halliday, resigned in protest of the sanctions, which he described as "satisfying the definition of genocide" (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 510). Also, according to Solomon (1994, p. 109), "Five months into his presidency, Clinton ordered a missile attack on Iraq and then backed it up with rhetoric from the same lexicon used by President Bush."

The Clinton administration also effectively gave the green light to Israel's airborne siege of Lebanon in late July 1993, which killed more than 130, and wounded 500, many of whom were civilians, and "turned many southern Lebanese villages into ghost towns" (Solomon, 1994, p. 132). With regard to the situation in Israel-Palestine, Clinton is often given credit for brokering the Camp David accords in 2000.[195] However, according to University of San Francisco professor Stephen Zunes, "It was under the Clinton administration that U.S. support for Israeli

[191] C-Span. (1995, January 24). *In 1995, Bill Clinton was all about "building that wall."* https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4652944/1995-bill-clinton-building-wall

[192] Chan, M. (2019, August 2). *The US's Immigration Crackdown Began Decades Ago Under Clinton*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/the-uss-immigration-crackdown-began-decades-ago-under-clinton/

[193] Guyer, J. (2022, January 27). *How America's NATO expansion obsession plays into the Ukraine crisis*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/22900113/nato-ukraine-russia-crisis-clinton-expansion

[194] Bovard, J. (2020, June 30). *Bill Clinton's Serbian War Atrocities Exposed in New Indictment*. Counter Punch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/06/30/bill-clintons-serbian-war-atrocities-exposed-in-new-indictment/

[195] Sjursen, D. (2019, July 20). *American History for Truthdiggers: Bill Clinton, the "New Democrat"*. Truth Dig. https://www.truthdig.com/articles/american-history-for-truthdiggers-bill-clinton-the-new-democrat/

settlements became apparent." For instance, Zunes adds, the Palestinian State proposed at the Camp David Accords would have accepted Israeli settlements (illegal according to the Fourth Geneva Conventions) and divided the Palestinian State into four non-contiguous regions.[196] Clinton also approved the Jerusalem Embassy Act in 1995, which recognized Jerusalem, undivided, as the capital of Israel.[197]

Like the Carter administration, President Clinton provided military aid to regimes responsible for human rights violations. For instance, "the Clinton administration announced it was bestowing $336 million worth of military hardware on Turkey's government," despite reports of human rights violations by the Turkish government at that time (Solomon, 1994, p. 130). Also, according to Solomon, "Seamless bipartisan continuity was also apparent in the White House relations with Russia" and, "When the Russian President dissolved parliament on the first day of autumn [1993], Clinton rushed to express enthusiasm for Yeltsin's blatantly unconstitutional move" (p. 133).

The Obama Presidency (2009–2016)

General Shift to the Right

In his book *A Biden/Obama Balance Sheet*, Eisenberg (2021, p. xiii) concludes that "Obama can be characterized as a cautious centrist, not a bold progressive." According to Eisenberg, some progressive change did occur under the Obama administration, such as declines in homicides and violent crime, infant mortality rates (in states that agreed to expand Medicaid), the jobless rate, and the number of federal prisoners. However, overall, the Obama–Biden administration either passively allowed opportunities to initiate change pass by, or took a conservative position. Where the administration did take a progressive position, the outcome was usually rejected by Congress, overturned by the courts, or rescinded by President Trump (ibid).

Similar to President Clinton, President Obama (also a Democrat) advanced a number of neoliberal and/or conservative policies in the domestic and foreign policy domains. According to Robert Reich (2015, p. 175), "Barack Obama – although often criticized by the business community for being anti-business – in fact presided over one of the most pro-business administrations in American history." Some authors have sought to draw attention to this policy continuity. For instance, consumer advocate Ralph Nader recalls that "One by one, previous presidents diminished the integrity of the presidency and violated the rule of law, paving the way for

[196] Zunes, S. (2020, November 28). *Pompeo Embraced Israeli Settlement, But Democrats Also Paved the Way for It*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/pompeo-embraced-israeli-settlements-but-democrats-also-paved-the-way-for-it/

[197] Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Jerusalem Embassy Act*. Retrieved March 4, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem_Embassy_Act

Trump's candidacy."[198] Shortly before the end of the Bush presidency, political philosopher Sheldon Wolin (2008, p. 286) presciently wrote, "The system is not dependent upon [George W. Bush's] particular persona. That this system will survive his retirement, would survive even if the Democrats were to become the majority party in control of both the presidency and Congress […suggests that] the fixation upon Bush obscures the real problem."

Socialist writer and activist Ashley Smith recalls Obama's "betrayal of his progressive promises and his record of continuity with many Bush policies, from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to the bailout of Wall Street."[199] Obama also refused to challenge several potentially impeachable actions of the Bush administration, such as "the extreme expansion of presidential powers (including 'signing statements'), the practice of torture, the denials of due process, and, above all, the lies that were employed to justify the war waged against Iraq" (Wolin, 2008, p. xvi). Consistent with this observation, Obama later sought to grant immunity to the Bush administration for the invasion of Iraq,[200] and for torture carried out by the CIA under Bush as part of the War on Terror.[201]

Economic Policy and Public Goods

After Obama entered the White House in 2009, he took up several initiatives proposed by the Bush administration including the $600 billion bank bailout. Obama also "chose as his advisors the very people responsible for the policies that brought on the [2008–2009] economic crisis" (Hahnel, 2012, p. 169). Citigroup, one of the largest donors to Obama's campaign, even appears to have hand-selected members of the Obama cabinet in October 2008, according to documents revealed by Wikileaks in 2016 (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 57). Given the Wall Street-insiders within the Obama administration such as Tim Geithner, Jack Lew, and Peter Orszag, Reich (2015, pp. 175-6) comments,

> Perhaps it is not entirely coincidental that the Obama administration never put tough conditions on banks receiving bailout money, never prosecuted a single top Wall Street executive for the excesses that led to the near meltdown, and even refused to support a small tax on financial transactions that would have generated tens of billions of dollars in annual revenues and discouraged program trading.

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[198] Nader, R. (2019, May 23). *What and Who Gave Us Trump?* Counter Punch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/05/23/what-and-who-gave-us-trump/

[199] Smith, A. (2015, May). *The Problem with Bernie Sanders*. Jacobin. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/05/bernie-sanders-socialist-president-clinton/

[200] Comar, I. (2023, August 22). *Obama DOJ Asks Court to Grant Immunity to George W. Bush for Iraq War*. Centre for Research on Globalization. https://www.globalresearch.ca/obama-doj-asks-court-to-grant-immunity-to-george-w-bush-for-iraq-war/5346637

[201] Greenwald, G. (2012, August 31). *Obama's justice department grants final immunity to Bush's CIA torturers*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/aug/31/obama-justice-department-immunity-bush-cia-torturer

Wolin (2008, p. xiii) asks plausibly: "what could be more unchanging than the perpetuation of the cozy and longstanding relationship between Washington and Wall Street?" Also, after entering the White House in 2009, President Obama, despite having veto-proof majorities in both chambers of the US Congress, and a strong public mandate, was unable or unwilling to include the public health insurance option in the Affordable Care Act.[202]

Later, during his second term as president, Obama signed the 2014 Farm Bill, which included legislation to cut $8.7 billion in food stamp benefits, translating into 850,000 households losing an average of $90 per month (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 202). In 2016, Obama also signed Senate Bill 764, which allows food companies to use QR codes and 1–800 numbers (rather than clear words on packaging) to label products containing genetically modified organisms (GMOs), thereby voiding some states' labeling laws (ibid, p. 209).

With regard to natural resources, in December 2014, Obama approved the transfer of the Oak Flat land in Arizona to Resolution Copper, which sought to mine the area for copper, a process expected to destroy sacred Native American sites. In January 2021, before leaving Office, the Trump administration approved the transfer.[203] Contradicting a 2008 campaign pledge to end Arctic offshore drilling, Obama opened the northern coast of Alaska to exploratory drilling for oil and gas in March 2010. Obama later banned oil and gas drilling in most waters of the Arctic Ocean in December 2016, although that did not halt the use of pre-existing oil wells (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 38).

Despite pledges to address climate change, US oil production grew each year of the Obama presidency to 9.4 million barrels per day in 2015, an increase of 88%. In 2015, US oil production reached a 40-year high. The Obama administration also oversaw the emergence of fracking (shale energy extraction) and lifted a ban on crude exports in 2015. The US's level of atmospheric carbon dioxide increased from about 385 parts per million in 2008, to about 404 parts per million in 2016 (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 52).

Barack Obama did roll back some of Bush's regressive tax cuts, but many remained such as cuts to capital gains and estate taxes (Reich, 2015, p. 145). Meanwhile, the combined total of US corporations' wealth held abroad (avoiding taxes on profits earned overseas) increased from $1.6 trillion in 2011 to $2.6 trillion by 2017 (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 85). Also, according to Eisenberg (2021, pp. 211–23), during Obama's presidency, the USA lost an additional 205,000 manufacturing jobs, the minimum wage remained at $7.25, union membership fell from 12.3% to 10.7% of all employees, and the overall infrastructure score from the American Society of Civil Engineers was either D or D+.

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[202] Frontline. (2010, April 13). *Obama's Deal* [Video]. Public Broadcasting Service. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/obamasdeal/

[203] McGivney, A. (2021, January 16). *Outcry as Trump officials to transfer sacred Native American land to miners*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/16/sacred-native-american-land-arizona-oak-flat

Given such continuities, it is perhaps not surprising that during the Obama administration, "corporate profits rose to the highest portion of the national economy since 1929" (Reich, 2015, p. 175). Corporate profits rose by 144%, while average weekly earnings for all workers rose by 4% (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 83). The average wealth of the bottom 99% dropped by $4500 between 2007 and 2016, and the real median household income of Americans stagnated at just over $61,000. Meanwhile, the average wealth of the top 1% rose by $4.9 million, and its share of the country's wealth increased from 33.6% to 38.5% (ibid, pp. 218–20). The wealth gap between white and black families – about 6.6 times greater for whites – also remained about the same while Obama was in office (ibid, p. 214).

Constitutional Rights and Liberties

Policy continuity from the Bush to the Obama administrations was also apparent when the latter extended the USA PATRIOT Act providing extensive surveillance powers to the federal government (Schubert et al., 2014, p. 235). Meanwhile, the watch list of suspected terrorists kept in the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE, created after 9-11-01), after initially growing from less than 100,000 in 2003 to about 435,000 in 2007, continued to grow during the Obama presidency from about 550,000 in 2010, up to 1.1 million by the end of 2013.[204] The Obama administration also created the Countering Violent Extremist program in 2011, which led to discriminatory policies against Muslim Americans including cases where the FBI pressured Muslim Americans to spy on other Muslims.[205] Obama also signed H.R. 1540, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2012, including Section 1021, which allowed for the indefinite detention of US citizens suspected of terrorist activity (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 160).

The Obama administration prosecuted more leakers, and twice as many whistleblowers under provisions of the 1917 Espionage Act, than all previous presidents combined (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 4).[206] Furthermore, during the Obama presidency, America's place on the World Press Freedom Index fell from 20th out of 175 countries, to 49th out of 179 countries (ibid, p. 29). Meanwhile, by 2015, prosecutions of federal white-collar crime were expected to reach a 20-year low (ibid, p. 172).

Turning to the topic of immigration, Obama had deported more migrants than any previous US president, and more than all other presidents of the twentieth

[204] DeYoung, K. (2007, March 26). *Terror Database has Quadrupled in Four Years*. Washington Post. http://www.informationliberation.com/?id=21143; Associated Press. (2014, August 5). *U.S. terror watchlist doubles in size in recent years*. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/u-s-terror-watchlist-doubles-in-size-in-recent-years-1.2728584

[205] Obeidallah, D. (2020, December 12). *Anti-Muslim policies forged under Obama flourished under Trump*. MSNBC. https://www.msnbc.com/opinion/anti-muslim-policies-forged-under-obama-flourished-under-trump-what-n1250966

[206] Risen, J. (2016, December 30). *If Donald Trump Targets Journalists, Thank Obama*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/30/opinion/sunday/if-donald-trump-targets-journalists-thank-obama.html

century combined (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 185).[207] Of the three million people deported during the Obama presidency, 1.7 million of them had no criminal record (ibid, p. 163). According to writer Jimmy Centeno and professors Don Deere and Frederick Mills, "Yesterday it was the Obama administration that ratcheted up the mass deportation machine, paving the way for the rabidly racist Trump."[208] More generally, *Vox* immigration reporter Dara Lind notes that the Obama administration was "running the [immigration] enforcement machine at full blast."[209]

Foreign Policy

Like the Bush and Trump administrations, the Obama administration did not move the USA toward becoming a state party to the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 536). According to author Carl Boggs, Obama "was among the most militaristic White House occupants in American history, taking the imperial presidency to new heights."[210] Corroborating Boggs's observation, the Obama administration approved drone strikes in Yemen (via Centcom) and Somalia (via Africom) with little transparency and no due process for the targets.[211] Obama also authorized targeted drone attacks against US citizens abroad accused of planning terrorism (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 513). Among them was Abdulrahman al-Aulaqi, a 16-year-old apolitical American citizen killed in Yemen in October 2011 (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 89). By the end of Obama's presidency, 542 drone strikes had been carried out, (ten times as many as during the Bush administration), killing 3797 people total, 324 of whom were civilians.

Under the Obama administration, the US military also carried out a bombing in the Afghan village of Bola Boluk, in western Afghanistan's Farah Province, killing 140 civilians (including 93 children) in the Spring of 2009.[212] Throughout Obama's presidency, US-led forces dropped about 100,000 bombs and missiles on seven countries, surpassing the 70,000 dropped on five countries during George W. Bush's equally long presidency. In 2016 alone, Obama's military dropped at least 26,171

[207] Lind, D. (2018, June 21). *What Obama did with migrant families* vs. *what Trump is doing*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/2018/6/21/17488458/obama-immigration-policy-family-separation-border

[208] Centeno, J., Deere, D., & Mills, F. (2018, June 27). *Family Separations: Trump's Executive Order Does Not Hide This Historical Pattern of Cruelty*. Counter Punch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/06/27/family-separations-trumps-executive-order-does-not-hide-this-historical-pattern-of-cruelty/

[209] Lind, D. (2018, July 9). *"Abolish ICE" shows how far left Democrats have moved on immigration*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/7/9/17548062/abolish-ice-democrats-immigration-plan

[210] Boggs, C. (2018, September 14). *Obama's Imperial Presidency*. Counter Punch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/09/14/obamas-imperial-presidency/

[211] Currier, C. (2015, October 15). *The Kill Chain*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/drone-papers/the-kill-chain/

[212] Street, P. (2010, January 13). *Killer Obama, Dr. King, and the Triple Evils*. The Black Agenda Report. https://blackagendareport.com/content/killer-obama-dr-king-and-triple-evils

bombs on foreign countries, mostly in Syria and Iraq, but also striking in Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, and Pakistan, all Muslim-majority countries (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 129).

Furthermore, the Obama administration invoked the privilege of state secrets to block judicial inquiry into extraordinary rendition and the "kill list" authorizing the CIA and Defense Department to target civilians.[213] Obama also maintained the military tribunals and detention center at Guantanamo Bay ("Gitmo") in Cuba (Schubert et al., 2014, p. 235). Although Obama issued an executive order on his second day as president to close Gitmo within a year, the detention camp remained open. While some blamed Congress, others argued that Obama lacked the political will to make the closure a reality (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 134).

As president, Obama also expanded the use of Special Operations forces, for instance in Syria and Iraq.[214] By the end of the Obama presidency, US Special Ops forces personnel – including soldiers, civilians, National Guard, and Reservists – had grown in number from 45,600 in 2001, to 70,000 by 2016, and were deployed to 138 countries (Eisenberg, 2021, pp. 121–3). And, although many Republicans accused the Obama administration of "depleting" the military, the overall level of military spending only went down by a small amount compared to the overall upward trend since 1949.[215] Although Obama had initially pledged to phase out nuclear weapons, he vowed in 2016 to build up the US nuclear stockpile, modernize nuclear production facilities, and redesign warheads for missiles, bombers, and submarines, at a projected cost of $1 trillion over thirty years (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 130).

With regard to support for foreign governments, Obama had refused to label as a coup the Egyptian military's 2013 removal of Mohamed Morsi, the country's first democratically elected president, as this would have barred the USA from providing aid to the military regime (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 183). After Egypt's new military ruler Abdel Fattah el-Sisi had carried out a massacre of pro-Morsi demonstrators conducting a sit-in, Obama had initially delayed the delivery of Harpoon missiles, F-16's, attack helicopters, and $260 million in cash to the Egyptian government, but then allowed the transfers to proceed in March 2015 (Eisenberg, 2021, pp. 109–10).

During the Arab Spring uprising in Bahrain in 2011, "Protesters were routinely injured and killed with U.S.-provided weapons, with the Obama administration approving $200 million in arms sales to Bahrain in 2010, months before the crackdown" (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 107). Obama had publicly criticized the violence used against the pro-democracy demonstrators in Bahrain, but the brutal crackdown

[213] Cohn, M. (2021, October 9). *Biden Tells Supreme Court that Publicly Documented Torture is a State Secret*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/biden-tells-supreme-court-that-publicly-documented-torture-is-a-state-secret/

[214] Jaffe, G., Ryan, M., Deyoung, K. (2016, April 30). *Obama plans to expand U.S. Special Operations forces in Syria*. Las Vegas Review-Journal. https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/nation-and-world/obama-plans-to-expand-u-s-special-operations-forces-in-syria/

[215] Ewing, P. (2016, April 29). *Fact Check: Has President Obama "Depleted" The Military?* National Public Radio. https://www.npr.org/2016/04/29/476048024/fact-check-has-president-obama-depleted-the-military

elicited no further US action. Also, according to historian Garikai Chengu, "in August 2011, President Obama confiscated $30 billion from Libya's Central Bank, which Gaddafi had earmarked for the establishment of the African IMF and African Central Bank."[216]

Under the Obama administration, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton indirectly supported the right-wing coup ousting President Manuel Zalaya in Honduras in 2009.[217] As with the Egyptian military regime, the Obama administration refused to designate the overthrow in Honduras as a coup. Despite an attempt by some Democratic Party representatives to cut off aid to Honduran military and police (given reports of human rights violations), the Obama administration approved increasing military aid to the regime for fiscal year 2012 (Eisenberg, 2021, pp. 96–7). In Haiti, an effort by the Haitian Parliament to raise garment industry workers' minimum wage from 24 to 61 cents an hour failed after the Obama–Biden administration, backing the foreign textile industry, succeeded in limiting the raise to 31 cents an hour (ibid, pp. 92–3).

In 2009, despite statements favoring a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, Obama acquiesced as Israel continued to construct new settlements, and thus "set the tone for the two terms to follow" (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 105). Also in 2009, the USA vetoed a UN Security Council resolution condemning Israeli settlements as illegal. During the 2012 Democratic National Committee (DNC) convention, the Obama administration advanced an amendment to the DNC constitution recognizing Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel, even though Palestinians seek to establish East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.[218] The DNC required a two-thirds voice vote approval of the convention delegates to adopt the amendment. However, after failing to acquire the necessary votes, the Democratic Party leadership simply adopted it anyway in front of the entire stadium of delegates.[219]

Following the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip in 2014, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu was criticized by the Obama administration for taking harsh, unnecessary measures. However, in 2016 Obama re-committed $38 billion in military assistance to Israel over the next ten years, the largest such aid package in US history (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 106). Also, during the assault on Gaza, Obama signed legislation providing Israel with an additional $225 million in military aid, despite

[216] Chengu, G. (2015, May 25). *Africa's Second Liberation*. Counter Punch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2015/05/25/africas-second-liberation/

[217] Valle, A. (2015, April 13). *Dancing with Monsters: The U.S. Response to the 2009 Honduran Coup*. Harvard Political Review. https://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/us-honduran-coup/

[218] DW News. (2017, December 13). *Muslim leaders declare "East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine"*. https://www.dw.com/en/muslim-leaders-declare-east-jerusalem-as-the-capital-of-the-state-of-palestine/a-41767851

[219] ABC News. (2012, September 5). *DNC 2012: DNC Platform Changes on God, Jerusalem Spur Contentious Floor Vote* [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8BwqzzqcDs

the disproportionate use of force by Israel (e.g., 67 Israeli soldiers and six civilians were killed, compared to 2251 Palestinians killed in Gaza[220]).

As president, Obama approved over $278 billion in foreign arms sales, more than double the total amount from the George W. Bush presidency (Eisenberg, 2021, p. 91). For example, a September 2016 report found that Obama had offered Saudi Arabia a total of $115 billion in weapons. Armed with weapons from the USA, the Saudi-led coalition began airstrikes against the Houthi rebels in Yemen on March 26, 2015. From that moment on, the Obama administration was there, organizing intelligence-sharing operations and logistical assistance such as aerial refueling (ibid, pp. 124–5).

The Biden Presidency (2021–Present)

Economic Policy and Public Goods

As an early general indication of policy continuity, most of President Joe Biden's first administration picks were from the Obama administration.[221] On the topic of public services, there appears to be some continuity from the Trump to the Biden administrations with regard to the US Postal Service (USPS). Specifically, as of January 2023, Biden had not removed Trump appointee Louis DeJoy from his position as USPS Postmaster General. DeJoy, a major contributor to the Trump presidential campaign, dramatically slowed first-class mail deliveries in swing states where many Democrats were expected to vote by mail in 2020.[222] Dejoy's 10-Year 'Delivering For America' Plan went into effect in October 2021 and is expected to slow first-class USPS delivery standards from three to five days, increase the price of deliveries, cut Post Office hours, and further consolidate mail processing facilities.[223]

With regard to social welfare, in June 2022, Biden selected a long-time supporter of Social Security privatization to the Social Security Advisory Board, created in 1994 to consult the president and Congress about the Social Security system.[224]

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[220] Wikipedia. (n.d.). *2014 Gaza War*. Retrieved January 21, 2023, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Gaza_War; (see "casualties and losses" box at top of webpage).

[221] Ordonez, F. (2020, December 12). *What Most Biden Picks Have in Common: Time in Obama administration*. WRVO public media. https://www.wrvo.org/post/what-most-biden-picks-have-common-time-obama-administration

[222] Perkins, T. (2021, February 16). *Democrats urge Biden to fire USPS chief Trump ally who decimated mail service*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/feb/16/democrats-biden-usps-chief-louis-dejoy-trump-ally

[223] Johnson, J. (2021, September 29). *Calls to Fire DeJoy Intensify as 10-Year Plan to Sabotage USPS Takes Effect*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/calls-to-fire-dejoy-intensify-as-10-year-plan-to-sabotage-usps-takes-effect/

[224] Cunningham-Cook, M. (2022, June 22). *Joe Biden has picked a longtime Social Security privatizer to oversee Social Security*. Jacobin. https://auth.jacobinmag.com/2022/06/andrew-biggs-biden-social-security-privatization

Also noteworthy, despite pledging to be the strongest labor president in recent US history during his 2020 campaign, in late November 2022, Biden urged congress to pass legislation blocking a nationwide rail strike by imposing a contract rejected by freight rail workers unions. Among the union's reasons for opposing the contract was its lack of guarantee of paid sick leave.[225]

Turning to fossil fuels and the environment, within the first month of entering the White House in January 2021, the Biden administration had issued thirty-one new oil drilling permits for operations on federal lands and coastal waters.[226] In April 2021, the Biden administration announced they would continue to allow oil to flow through the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL).[227] Also, in June 2021, Biden approved the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline, which would carry more than 750,000 barrels of Canadian tar sands oil a day across indigenous land and fragile ecosystems.[228]

At the UN Climate Summit in Glasgow in November 2021, the Biden administration chose not to sign a pledge to phase out the use of coal, the dirtiest fossil fuel.[229] Shortly after the Summit ended, Biden advanced plans to open up 80 million acres of the Gulf of Mexico to new oil and gas drilling (the largest-ever sale of drilling leases in the Gulf)[230] and announced that the USA would tap into its strategic oil reserves to reduce energy prices.[231] In June 2022, a group of environmental organizations sued the Biden administration for issuing over 3500 oil and gas drilling permits on public lands in New Mexico and Wyoming.[232]

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[225] Democracy Now. (2022, December 1). *House Passes Bill to Block Rail Strike at Urging of President Biden*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/12/1/headlines/house_passes_bill_to_block_rail_strike_at_urging_of_president_biden

[226] Dlouhy, J. A. (2021, January 28). *Biden issues dozens of oil drilling permits in first few days*. Financial Review. https://www.afr.com/world/north-america/biden-issues-dozens-of-oil-drilling-permits-in-first-few-days-20210128-p56xgs

[227] Doherty, L. (2021, April 9). *Sierra Club Statement on Biden administration's Inaction on the Dakota Access Pipeline*. Sierra Club. https://www.sierraclub.org/press-releases/2021/04/sierra-club-statement-biden-administration-s-inaction-dakota-access-pipeline

[228] Democracy Now. (2021, June 25). *Biden administration backs permits for Enbridge Line 3 tar sands pipeline*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/6/25/headlines

[229] Plumer, B., & Friedman, L. (2021, November 4). *More than 40 countries pledge at U.N. climate summit to end use of coal power*. The Seattle Times. https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/more-than-40-countries-pledge-at-u-n-climate-summit-to-end-use-of-coal-power/

[230] Democracy Now. (2021, November 18). *Biden Administration to Hold Massive Auction for Oil and Gas Leases in Gulf of Mexico*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/11/18/headlines/biden_administration_to_hold_massive_auction_for_oil_and_gas_leases_in_gulf_of_mexico

[231] Democracy Now. (2021, November 24). *U.S. and other nations to tap oil reserves in attempt to lower consumer fuel prices*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/11/24/headlines/us_and_other_nations_to_tap_oil_reserves_in_attempt_to_lower_consumer_fuel_prices

[232] Democracy Now. (2022, June 17). *Groups sue Biden over drilling permits in New Mexico and Wyoming*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/6/17/headlines/groups_sue_biden_over_drilling_permits_in_new_mexico_and_wyoming

Constitutional Rights and Liberties

On the topic of policing, many civil rights activists protesting the killing of George Floyd (in the Summer of 2020) called for reducing the role of the police and redirecting these funds to different social services. By contrast, Biden wrote an op-ed for *USA Today* that called for increasing funding to the police.[233] Biden also backed down from a pledge to establish a federal police oversight commission, arguing that the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act was a better way to advance reforms dealing with excessive force (although the bill was never passed).[234] With regard to criminal procedure, contrary to Biden's 2020 election campaign pledge, in October 2021, the Justice Department sought to reinstate the federal death penalty for the Boston Marathon bomber.[235]

Turning to the topic of immigrant rights, in February 2021, Biden's Press Secretary Jen Psaki announced that the administration would continue Trump's policy of turning away asylum seekers at the US-Mexico border.[236] Also, while Biden has rejected Trump's "zero tolerance" policy, his administration has not ended immigrant family separation.[237] As of June 9, 2021, just seven children detained at the US-Mexico border had been reunited with their families.[238] During the Biden presidency, many migrant children from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador have been detained for longer than the 72 hour legal limit.[239] Also noteworthy, migrant children at two shelters in Texas described poor living conditions in

[233] Democracy Now. (2020, June 12). *Joe Biden Calls for Increased Law Enforcement Funds Amid Calls to Defund the Police*. https://www.democracynow.org/2020/6/12/headlines/joe_biden_calls_for_increased_law_enforcement_funds_amid_calls_to_defund_the_police

[234] Hunnicutt, T. (2021, April 12). *Biden administration drops plans for police oversight, citing George Floyd bill*. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-biden-police-idUSKBN2BZ24O

[235] Democracy Now. (2021, October 14). *DOJ asks SCOTUS to reinstate death penalty for Boston Marathon bomber*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/10/14/headlines/doj_asks_scotus_to_reinstate_death_penalty_for_boston_marathon_bomber

[236] Democracy Now. (2021, February 11). *Biden Administration to Continue Trump-Era Policy of Turning Away Asylum Seekers at Southern Border*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/2/11/headlines/biden_administration_to_continue_trump_era_policy_of_turning_away_asylum_seekers_at_southern_border

[237] Binion, B. (2021, February 12). *Biden is still separating families at the border. Where is the media outrage?* Reason. https://reason.com/2021/02/12/biden-family-separations-mexico-border-trump-zero-tolerance-media-outrage/

[238] Democracy Now. (2021, June 9). *Over 2000 migrant children might still be separated from families*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/6/9/headlines/over_2_000_migrant_children_might_still_be_separated_from_families

[239] Democracy Now. (2021, March 11). *Despite Immigration Pledges, Biden Admin Detains Thousands of Unaccompanied Migrant Children*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/3/11/increase_unaccompanied_child_migrants_aura_bogado

May of 2021.[240] The Biden administration also struck agreements with the governments of Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala to further militarize their borders to keep asylum seekers from reaching the USA.[241] During a visit to Guatemala on June 7, 2021, Vice President Kamala Harris said plainly to would-be migrants headed toward the USA: "Do not come."[242]

Within the first few weeks of the Biden presidency, hundreds of immigrants had already been deported.[243] As of March 25, 2021, under the Biden administration, more Haitians had been deported over the previous two months (at least 1300, including children and infants) than were deported under the Trump administration the previous year, despite Haiti's political and economic crisis at the time.[244] Biden carried out these deportations using a Trump-era public health order – Title 42 – which denied asylum seekers basic legal rights.[245] This pattern continued in September 2021, when the Biden administration began deporting thousands of Haitian asylum seekers camped at a Texas border town.[246] In December 2022, the Biden administration appealed a court ruling in order to uphold Title 42, which, by that time, the administration had used to expel more migrants than the Trump administration.[247]

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[240] Montoya-Galvez, C. (2021, May 19). *Migrant children describe poor conditions at makeshift U.S. shelters in interviews with attorneys*. CBS News. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/immigration-border-migrant-children-poor-conditions-shelters/

[241] Democracy Now. (2021, April 13). *Biden admin strikes deals with Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala to Further Militarize borders*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/4/13/headlines/biden_admin_strikes_deals_with_mexico_honduras_and_guatemala_to_further_militarize_borders

[242] Naylor, B., & Keith, T. (2021, June 7). *Kamala Harris tells Guatemalans not to migrate to the United States*. National Public Radio. https://www.npr.org/2021/06/07/1004074139/harris-tells-guatemalans-not-to-migrate-to-the-united-states

[243] Merchant, N. (2021, February 1). *Hundreds deported under Biden, including witness to massacre*. AP News. https://apnews.com/article/biden-administration-deports-hundreds-482889ed56ed3cd02c9c61ebd1e3fbb7

[244] Democracy Now. (2021, March 25). *Deportations of Haitians Soar Under Biden Despite Political Crisis in Haiti*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/3/25/headlines/deportations_of_haitians_soar_under_biden_despite_political_crisis_in_haiti

[245] Borger, J. (2021, March 25). *Haiti deportations soar as Biden administration deploys Trump-era health order*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/mar/25/haiti-deportations-soar-as-biden-administration-deploys-trump-era-health-order

[246] Ruiz-Grossman, S. (2021, September 20). *Outrage as Biden Administration rapidly deports Haitian migrants from Texas border*. Yahoo News. https://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/outrage-biden-administration-rapidly-deports-203949913.html

[247] Beitsch, R. (2022, December 7). *Biden administration to appeal ruling striking Title 42*. The Hill. https://thehill.com/policy/national-security/3766086-biden-administration-to-appeal-ruling-striking-title-42-pledges-new-regulation-from-cdc/

Foreign Policy

Turning to foreign policy, and the topic of militarization, on the campaign trail for the presidency in 2020, Biden indicated that he might further increase military spending if elected, despite the Pentagon's record budget of $738 billion at the time.[248] Biden is also planning to invest $100 billion to develop a new nuclear missile far stronger than that used in Hiroshima.[249] Meanwhile, in June 2022, Biden announced an increased US military presence across Europe in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.[250] Throughout 2022, the Biden administration approved over $113 billion in aid to Ukraine (about $67 billion for military assistance) since Russia's invasion.[251] Also noteworthy, in December 2021, the Biden administration rejected calls to ban lethal autonomous weapons or "killer robots."[252]

With regard to the war on terrorism, in October 2021, the Biden administration, echoing Trump's position, invoked the state secrets privilege to block the testimonies of James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen – chief architects of the CIA's "enhanced interrogation techniques" – from being heard in Poland about Abu Zubaydah (who was tortured at a CIA black site there).[253] On the topic of drones, the Biden administration reportedly urged a federal court to sentence drone whistleblower Daniel Hale to at least nine years in prison.[254] The first US drone strike under the Biden administration was carried out in Somalia in July of 2021.[255] The State Department under Biden has also continued to seek the extradition of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange from Britain.[256]

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[248] Democracy Now. (2020, September 11). *Joe Biden says he may further increase military spending if elected*. https://www.democracynow.org/2020/9/11/headlines/joe_biden_says_he_may_further_increase_military_spending_if_elected

[249] Democracy Now. (2021, March 18). *"Immoral & Illegal": US & UK move to expand nuclear arsenals, defying global disarmament treaties*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/3/18/nuclear_weapons_proliferation

[250] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2022, June 29). *Ukraine war: US to ramp up military presence across Europe*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61983555

[251] Towner, C. (2023, January 5). *Congress Approved $113 Billion of Aid to Ukraine in 2022*. Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. https://www.crfb.org/blogs/congress-approved-113-billion-aid-ukraine-2022

[252] Democracy Now. (2021, December 6). *U.S. Opposes a Ban on Killer Robots Ahead of U.N. Weapons Summit*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/12/6/us_rejects_killer_robot_ban

[253] Cohn, M. (2021, October 9). *Biden Tells Supreme Court that Publicly Documented Torture is a State Secret*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/biden-tells-supreme-court-that-publicly-documented-torture-is-a-state-secret/

[254] Democracy Now. (2021, July 22). *Biden administration Seeks 9-Year Sentence for Drone Whistleblower Daniel Hale*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/7/22/headlines/biden_administration_seeks_9_year_sentence_for_drone_whistleblower_daniel_hale

[255] Democracy Now. (2021, July 22). *U.S. Launches First Drone Strike on Somalia Under President Biden*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/7/22/headlines/us_launches_first_drone_strike_on_somalia_under_president_biden

[256] Democracy Now. (2021, February 10). *U.S. to pursue extradition of Julian Assange*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/2/10/headlines/us_to_pursue_extradition_of_julian_assange_as_press_freedom_groups_warn_of_dangerous_precedent

A couple of days before the USA completed its withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, after a terrorist attack at the Kabul airport, the US military carried out a drone strike on Afghan civilians living near the Kabul airport, killing ten including six children.[257] After the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in 2021, the USA seized $7 billion of foreign currency reserves from Afghanistan's central bank, contributing to a humanitarian crisis in the country.[258]

We also see some continuities in Biden's foreign policy toward nonaligned states. For instance, after entering the White House, Biden said he would continue to impose sanctions against Iran, even if the nuclear deal is restored.[259] Responding to attacks on US embassies in Iraq, Biden authorized a missile strike on Iran-backed militias in Syria on February 25, 2021. The attack was reported to have killed at least twenty-two people.[260] In June of 2021, additional US airstrikes were carried out against Iran-backed militias along the Iraq-Syria border in response to drone attacks on US troops and personnel.[261]

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Antony Blinken indicated that Biden would continue to recognize Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido as Venezuela's President and would continue to impose sanctions on the country.[262] As of July 2021, Biden has also maintained an economic embargo against Cuba,[263] kept the Guantanamo Bay prison open,[264] and has maintained sanctions on Cuba such as limits on remittances to the island.[265] (As was mentioned previously, the Biden administration eased some sanctions on Cuba and on the Venezuelan state oil

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[257] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2021, August 30). *Afghanistan drone strike: "Ten people died here…including my daughter"*. https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-58389241

[258] Grim, R. (2022, September 13). *U.S. to release stolen Afghan Central Bank funds to Swiss bank*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2022/09/13/afghanistan-central-bank-funds-release/

[259] Democracy Now. (2021, June 10). *U.S. to keep Trump-Era sanctions on Iran even if nuclear deal is restored*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/6/10/headlines/us_to_keep_trump_era_sanctions_on_iran_even_if_nuclear_deal_is_restored

[260] De Luce, D. et al. (2021, February 25). *Biden orders airstrikes in Syria, retaliating against Iran-backed militias*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/u-s-bombs-facilities-syria-used-iran-backed-militia-n1258912

[261] Democracy Now. (2021, June 28). *Iraq condemns violation of sovereignty after U.S. launches airstrikes in Iraq and Syria*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/6/28/headlines/iraq_condemns_violation_of_sovereignty_after_us_launches_airstrikes_in_iraq_and_syria

[262] Reuters Staff. (2021, January 19). *Biden will recognize Guaido as Venezuela's leader, top diplomat says*.https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-biden-state-venezuela/biden-will-recognize-guaido-as-venezuelas-leader-top-diplomat-says-idUSKBN29O2PE

[263] Goodman, A., & González, J. (2021, July 14). *Thousands in Cuba Protest Amid Deep Economic Crisis and Ongoing US Blockade*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/video/thousands-in-cuba-protest-amid-deep-economic-crisis-and-ongoing-us-blockade/

[264] Democracy Now. (2022, January 11). *Guantánamo Turns 20: Ex-Prisoner Moazzam Begg Calls on Biden to Close Site & End Legacy of Torture*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/1/11/guantanamo_bay_20_anniversary_moazzam_begg

[265] Wilkinson, T. (2021, October 18). *Despite promises to lift some Trump sanctions, Biden leaves Cuba in deep freeze*. The Los Angeles Times. https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2021-10-18/biden-leaves-cuba-in-the-deep-freeze

company in May 2022, although Biden conceded that the latter change was relatively minor[266]).

We can also review the Biden administration's positions toward human rights-violating US allies. With regard to the situation in Israel-Palestine, Biden's nominee for UN Envoy, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, adopting the right-wing Zionist framing, described the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement as verging on antisemitism at a confirmation hearing.[267] Also, Secretary of State Antony Blinken indicated that the Biden administration would not reverse Trump's decision to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem.[268] In July 2022, a Palestinian legal group revealed that Biden's proposed US Embassy location in Jerusalem would be on land illegally confiscated by Israel in 1948.[269]

In February 2021, shortly after Biden began his first presidential term, the Israeli government approved a nearly $3 billion arms deal with the USA while further confiscation of Palestinian lands was taking place.[270] During Israel's bombing of the Gaza strip in May 2021, the Biden administration condoned Israel's actions, saying Israel has a right to defend itself, while Pentagon Chief Lloyd Austin reaffirmed "ironclad" US support for Israel. The USA also blocked the UN Security Council from issuing a resolution about the crisis.[271] Biden approved a $735 million sale of weapons to Israel during the onslaught, despite having already killed 200 Palestinians, wounding over 1200, and displacing tens of thousands.[272] Under Biden, the US State Department has also sided with Israel in opposition to an International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation into possible war crimes carried out by Israeli forces in Palestine.[273] In July 2022, ahead of Biden's visit to the region, his

[266] Nelson, S. (2022, May 17). *Biden to ease Venezuela sanctions one day after Cuba rules lift*. The New York Post. https://nypost.com/2022/05/17/biden-eases-venezuela-sanctions-one-day-after-cuba-rules-lift/

[267] Samuels, B. (2021, January 27). *"BDS Verges on Antisemitism," Biden's Pick for UN Envoy Says*. https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-bds-verges-on-antisemitism-biden-s-pick-for-un-envoy-says-1.9488357

[268] AlJazeera. (2021, January 20). *US to keep embassy in Jerusalem: Biden's top diplomat*. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/20/us-secretary-of-state-blinken-us-embassy-to-remain-in-jerusalem

[269] Democracy Now. (2022, July 11). *Report: U.S. Planning to Build Israeli Embassy in Jerusalem on Land Seized from Palestinians*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/7/11/headlines/report_us_planning_to_build_israeli_embassy_in_jerusalem_on_land_seized_from_palestinians

[270] Democracy Now. (2021, February 11). *Israel Approves $3B U.S. Arms Deal; Soldiers Demolish Palestinian Village*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/2/11/headlines/israel_approves_3_billion_arms_deal_with_us_soldiers_demolish_palestinian_bedouin_village

[271] Democracy Now. (2021, May 13). *U.S. blocks U.N. resolution on Israel-Palestine as Biden asserts Israel's "Right to defend itself"*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/5/13/headlines/us_blocks_un_resolution_on_israel_palestine_as_biden_asserts_israels_right_to_defend_itself

[272] Johnson, J. (2021, May 17). *Biden push for $735 million weapons sale to Israel amid onslaught sparks outrage*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/biden-push-for-735-million-weapons-sale-to-israel-amid-onslaught-sparks-outrage/

[273] Kelly, L. (2021, March 13). *Biden admin: International Criminal Court "unfairly" targeting Israel*. The Hill. https://thehill.com/policy/international/541480-biden-state-department-international-criminal-court-unfairly-targeting-israel-probe

administration was accused of whitewashing the killing of Palestinian American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh by the Israeli army in the occupied West Bank.[274]

It also appears that US-Saudi relations will not fundamentally change under the Biden administration, despite pledges to the contrary. After a US intelligence report confirmed the responsibility of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) with the murder of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi in late February 2021, Biden indicated that he wanted to deal with King Salman rather than his son MBS. However, the King and MBS work together closely, so this distinction would not mean much in practice.[275] Ultimately, Biden chose not to place sanctions on MBS, concerned this would "rupture" the US-Saudi relationship.[276] Despite Biden's pledge to treat the Saudi government like a "pariah" for its human rights abuses, he greeted MBS with a "fist bump" during a trip to Saudi Arabia in July 2022,[277] and granted him sovereign immunity over the killing of Khashoggi in November of 2022.[278]

Breaking his previous pledge, in November 2021, Biden also advanced plans to sell $650 million worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia.[279] Earlier that year, in April 2021, Biden also approved a $23 billion arms sale to the United Arab Emirates, which has been involved in the Saudi-led war in Yemen.[280] As of December 2022, the Biden administration has continued to support the Saudi-led war.[281] During the

[274] Democracy Now. (2022, July 8). *U.S. Accused of Whitewashing Israel's Killing of Shireen Abu Akleh Ahead of Biden's Middle East Trip*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/7/8/biden_middle_east_shireen_abu_akleh

[275] Gardner, F. (2021, February 26). *Jamal Khashoggi: How intelligence report could dent US-Saudi ties for years*. British Broadcasting Corporation. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56206325

[276] Haltiwanger, J. (2021, February 26). *Biden will not sanction MBS over Khashoggi's killing despite US report implicating the Saudi leader*. MSN. https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/biden-will-not-sanction-mbs-over-khashoggis-killing-despite-us-report-implicating-the-saudi-leader-in-the-murder/ar-BB1e3pbY

[277] Shinkman, P. D. (2022, July 15). *Biden Greets Saudi Crown Prince With a Fist Bump*. US News & World Report. https://www.usnews.com/news/world-report/articles/2022-07-15/biden-greets-saudi-crown-prince-mohammed-bin-salman-with-a-fist-bump

[278] Kirchgaessner, S. (2022, November 17). *Biden administration says Mohammed bin Salman should be granted sovereign immunity in Khashoggi civil case*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/18/biden-administration-says-mohammed-bin-salman-sovereign-immunity-civil-case-khashoggi

[279] Democracy Now. (2021, November 23). *Senators move to block Biden's planned $650 M weapons sale to Saudi Arabia*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/11/23/headlines/senators_move_to_block_bidens_planned_650m_weapons_sale_to_saudi_arabia

[280] Zengerle, P. (2021, April 13). *Biden administration proceeding with $23 billion weapon sales to UAE*. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/exclusive-biden-administration-proceeding-with-23-billion-weapon-sales-uae-2021-04-13/

[281] Democracy Now. (2022, December 16). *Biden, like Trump before him, derails effort to end U.S. support for Saudi war in Yemen*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/12/16/bernie_sanders_yemen_war_resolution

Biden presidency, military aid to the Egyptian military government has also continued despite the latter's human rights abuses.[282]

Congress and Subnational Governments

Economic Policy and Public Goods

Evidence of the Democratic Party's shift to the right can be found in the executive branch (some of which was just reviewed) as well as within the US Congress and at the subnational level, which I will now examine. With regard to the environment (a type of public good), Congressional Democrats are sometimes criticized for not being more supportive of green policies. For instance, according to author Rob Urie, the debt ceiling agreement negotiated by congressional Democrats in 2019 precluded large-scale public spending on a Green New Deal.[283] At one point, the Democratic National Committee even vetoed the discussion of climate change in the 2019 Democratic Party presidential primary debates.[284]

On the topic of health care reform, in the early 1990s, the Clinton health care proposal "failed to get a floor vote in a session in which the Democratic Party held majorities in both houses" (Adolino & Blake, 2011, p. 249). More recently, despite strong public support for "Medicare For All,"[285] after winning the House majority in 2018, the Democratic Party appeared to drag its feet on the issue. Representative Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) introduced a Medicare For All bill on February 27, 2019, but this legislation had only received support from 106 other House Democrats, while another 130 had yet to sign on, many having received high levels of funding from the healthcare industry.[286] The number of Democratic Party sponsors of the legislation further declined after taking control of the House in January 2019.[287]

In the State of California, after the Senate passed a single-payer health care bill (SB 562) on June 1, 2017, Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon (a Democrat)

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[282] Democracy Now. (2022, May 3). *State Dept. "Disturbed" by Reports Egyptian Critic Died in Custody with Signs of Torture*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/5/3/headlines/state_dept_disturbed_by_reports_egyptian_critic_died_in_custody_with_signs_of_torture

[283] Urie, R. (2019, July 26). *How NAFTA Killed the Green New Deal*. Counter Punch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/07/26/how-nafta-killed-the-green-new-deal/

[284] Democracy Now. (2019, July 16). *Who is the DNC Loyal To?: Dahr Jamail Questions DNC Veto of Primary Climate Debate*. https://www.democracynow.org/2019/7/16/who_is_the_dnc_loyal_too. This veto was apparently overturned, however, as the CNN debate hosts from the second Democratic Party primary debate on July 31, 2019 explicitly raised climate change as an issue.

[285] Sullivan, P. (2019, January 23). *Poll: 56% of public supports "Medicare for all"*. The Hill. https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/426418-poll-56-percent-of-public-supports-medicare-for-all

[286] Higgins, E. (2019, March 7). *Less than Half of House Democrats Have Signed on to Medicare for All*. Truth Dig. https://www.truthdig.com/articles/less-than-half-of-house-democrats-have-signed-on-to-medicare-for-all/

[287] Corcoran, M. (2019, March 17). *Establishment Democrats are Undermining Medicare for All*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/establishment-democrats-are-undermining-medicare-for-all/

prevented further consideration of the bill on June 24, 2017.[288] On January 31, 2022, Democrats in the California Assembly failed to acquire the 41 votes needed to advance a universal health care bill, despite controlling 56 of the 80 seats in the chamber.[289] Also related to public health, California's Democratic Party Governor Gavin Newsom vetoed a 2022 bill legalizing safe (supervised) drug injection sites for addicts throughout the state. Similarly, Democratic Party Governor Jerry Brown vetoed a 2018 bill legalizing such sites in San Francisco.[290] Also in California, a bill establishing a right to housing was blocked by Assembly Appropriations Chairwoman Lorena Gonzalez, a Democrat from San Diego.[291]

Turning to the topic of education, following a wave of public school teacher strikes in several states in 2018, as well as a similar strike in Los Angeles in January of 2019, Eric Blanc, who reported on the strikes, observed that "the teacher revolt expresses a rejection of the austerity and privatization agenda pushed by both Democrats and Republicans, particularly since the Great Recession."[292] In Washington DC, after 56% of voters approved Initiative 77 (during a June 2018 primary election) to provide a wage hike for restaurant servers and bartenders, the Democratic Party-controlled Council voted 8-5 to overturn the initiative (seven Democrats and one Independent voted to overturn the initiative, while three Democrats and two Independents voted to preserve it).[293]

Constitutional Rights and Liberties

One can also identify bipartisan alignment on topics related to constitutional rights and liberties. For instance, in November 2011, "the Occupy Wall Street encampments were attacked and cleared on orders from Democratic Party mayors – many of them known for being liberals – from Boston to Chicago to Portland to

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[288] Kavanaugh, J. (2017, June 27). *California Scheming: Democrats Betray Single-Payer Again*. CounterPunch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/06/27/california-scheming-democrats-betray-single-payer-again/

[289] CBS News. (2022, February 1). *Universal Health care bill dies in California*. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/universal-healthcare-bill-california-dies-in-legislature/

[290] CBS News. (2022, August 23). *Bill legalizing drug injection sites vetoed by Calif. Governor*. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/legal-drug-injection-sites-vetoed-california-governor-newsom-world-of-unintended-consequences/

[291] Wiley, H. (2020, January 23). *"Right to housing" bill dies mysteriously in California Capitol. What happened?* The Sacramento Bee. https://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article239576043.html

[292] Blanc, E., & Day, M. (2019, January 14). *LA's teachers can teach the working class about the power of labor strikes*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/14/la-teachers-working-class-power-labor-strikes

[293] Nirappil, F. (2018, October 2). *D.C. Council takes initial vote to overturn wage hike for bartenders, servers – four months after voters approved it*. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/dc-council-takes-initial-vote-to-overturn-initiative-77-four-months-after-voters-approved-it/2018/10/02/da906320-c651-11e8-b1ed-1d2d65b86d0c_story.html

Oakland."[294] According to Micah White (2016, p. 31), after the police crackdown on Occupy Wall Street in New York City's Zuccotti Park, "The counter-revolutionary tactics developed by [Democrat Michael] Bloomberg and others were quickly deployed in city after city." While this occurred, President Obama remained silent on the matter (Street, 2014, p. 13; White, 2016, p. 33).

Later, during the protests against police brutality following the killing of George Floyd in 2020, some recognized that many recent police killings, as well as the police repression of protests, were carried out under Democratic Party leaders at the local level.[295] Around that same time, Bernie Sanders (I-VT), generally viewed as at the far-left of the ideological spectrum in the US Senate, came out against the George Floyd protestors' demands to defund the police.[296]

With regard to civil liberties, a broad bipartisan consensus was achieved in the initial passage of the USA PATRIOT Act in 2001, legislation, which "largely swept aside" concerns of civil libertarians (Schubert et al., 2014, p. 99). Later, in November 2019, the Democrats re-authorized the PATRIOT Act at the end of a government funding resolution[297] and, in May 2020, Senator Bernie Sanders failed to cast the decisive vote on an amendment requiring a warrant to collect information from individuals' internet browsing history.[298] Also indicative of bipartisan alignment, in October 2018, Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) cut a deal with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) to fast-track fifteen of Donald Trump's judicial appointments to lifetime federal court positions.[299]

On the topic of workers' rights, even more progressive Democrats such as Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren were silent about a multi-state prison strike organized in the Summer of 2018 to resist state exploitation of prisoners' labor.[300] As a noteworthy example from the state level, in January 2022 Maine's Democratic Party

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[294] Smith, A. (2015, May). *The Problem with Bernie Sanders*. Jacobin. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/05/bernie-sanders-socialist-president-clinton/

[295] Sullivan, A. (2020, June 5). *Electing more Democrats won't stop police brutality or racial disparities*. The Gazette. https://www.thegazette.com/subject/opinion/guest-columnist/electing-more-democrats-wont-stop-police-brutality-or-racial-disparities-20200605

[296] Jacobs, E. (2020, June 10). *Bernie Sanders doesn't support defunding police, wants to pay cops more*. The New York Post. https://nypost.com/2020/06/10/sanders-doesnt-support-defunding-police-wants-to-pay-cops-more/

[297] Johnson, J. (2019, November 19). *House Democrats Hand Trump "Authoritarian' Surveillance Powers"*. TruthDig. https://www.truthdig.com/articles/house-democrats-hand-trump-authoritarian-surveillance-powers/

[298] Morrison, S. (2020, May 14). *The Senate voted to let the government keep surveilling your online life without a warrant*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/recode/2020/5/13/21257481/wyden-freedom-patriot-act-amendment-mcconnell

[299] Johnson, J. (2018, October 12). *Schumer rubber stamps 15 more right-wing judges for Trump*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/schumer-rubber-stamps-15-more-right-wing-judges-for-trump/

[300] Chamseddine, R. (2018, August 29). *The Democrats' Near-Total Silence on the National Prison Strike Speaks Volumes*. Splinter News. https://splinternews.com/the-democrats-near-total-silence-on-the-national-prison-1828636782

Governor Janet Mills vetoed legislation that would have recognized farmworkers' right to unionize.[301]

Also relevant here is the topic of immigrant rights. Amid growing public concern over the Trump administration's practice of separating immigrant children from their parents, three Democrats from the House of Representatives – Mark Pocan (D-WI), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) and Adriano Espaillat (D-NY) – proposed a bill to abolish the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency. However, after the Republican Party agreed to hold a vote on the bill, Democrats (including the lawmakers who drafted it, and the Hispanic Caucus) indicated that they would not vote for their own legislation.[302] The vote to confirm Congress's support for ICE was later passed by a wide margin in the Republican-controlled House of Representatives (244–35) with 133 Democrats abstaining, eighteen voting in favor, and thirty-four voting against.

In 2019, the Democratic Party majority in the House of Representatives, led by Nancy Pelosi, also adopted the Republican Party's Senate version of an immigration bill, without pushing for amendments to improve conditions for migrants being held in concentration camps on the US-Mexico border.[303] Aside from the Progressive "Squad" Caucus – Ilhan Omar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ayanna Pressley, and Rashida Tlaib – all House Democrats voted for the Senate Republicans' version of the bill. Democratic Party leader Nancy Pelosi later even mocked the Squad for only having their own four votes in opposition.[304] Despite such disagreements, all four members of the Squad would still vote to reelect Pelosi to the House Speaker position in January 2021.[305]

Foreign Policy

Examples of the Democratic Party's rightward shift can also be found on the topic of military spending. Domestically, the National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAAs) are regularly approved with broad bipartisan support in both the US House and Senate. In recent years, the NDAAs have ratcheted up military spending, setting new

[301] Whittle, P. (2022, January 8). *Gov. Mills vetoes bill to allow farmworkers to unionize*. WGME. https://wgme.com/news/local/maine-governor-vetoes-bill-to-allow-farm-workers-to-unionize

[302] Nilsen, E., & Golshan, T. (2018, July 13). *Democrats aren't ready to actually vote for an "Abolish ICE" bill*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/2018/7/13/17568170/house-democrats-abolish-ice-bill-jayapal-pocan-immigration-congress

[303] Holmes, J. (2019, June 13). *An Expert on Concentration Camps Says That's Exactly What the U.S. Is Running at the Border*. Esquire. https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a27813648/concentration-camps-southern-border-migrant-detention-facilities-trump/

[304] Grim, R. (2019, July 18). *Chuck Schumer, In Meeting with Progressive Caucus*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2019/07/18/border-bill-chuck-schumer-congressional-progressive-caucus/

[305] Rodgers, H. (2021, January 3). *Every Member of "The Squad" Voted to Reelect Nancy Pelosi as House Speaker*. The Daily Caller. https://dailycaller.com/2021/01/03/every-member-squad-voted-reelect-nancy-pelosi-house-speaker/

records of $717 billion (NDAA 2019[306]), $738 billion (NDAA 2020[307]), $740 billion (NDAA 2021[308]), $778 billion, the highest since World War II (NDAA 2022[309]), and $858 billion, $45 billion more than what Biden requested (NDAA 2023[310]).

As was previously mentioned, throughout 2022, the US Congress approved over $113 billion in aid to Ukraine (including $67 billion for military assistance) since Russia's invasion that February. In late October 2022, under pressure from Democratic Party leaders, the party's progressive caucus withdrew a letter to the White House emphasizing the need for a negotiated settlement with Russia.[311] Also relevant, in December of 2021, the US Senate defeated a bipartisan amendment (supported by Democrat Bernie Sanders as well as Republicans Rand Paul and Mike Lee) to remove the Saudi arms sale from a military spending bill.[312]

On the topic of Israel-Palestine, there also appears to be a tacit consensus between the leaders of the two parties favoring Israel over Palestinian rights. Often this bipartisanship is explicit. For instance, during Israel's assault on the Gaza strip in 2014, the US Congress approved an additional $225 million in military aid with a 395-8 vote in the House and unanimously in the Senate.[313] In July 2019, large majorities in both the Republican-controlled Senate and the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives (including progressive "Squad" member Ayanna Pressley) voted to oppose the pro-Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, while the Trump administration prevented the UN Security Council from condemning Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes on the outskirts of

[306] United States Senate. (2018, September 18). *Roll Call Vote 115th Congress - second Session*. https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=115&session=2&vote=00211#position

[307] Johnson, J. (2019, December 12). *"Atrocious": 188 Democrats Join GOP to Hand Trump $738 Billion Military Budget That Includes "Space Force"*. Common Dreams. https://www.commondreams.org/news/2019/12/12/atrocious-188-democrats-join-gop-hand-trump-738-billion-military-budget-includes

[308] Democracy Now. (2020, July 24). *37 Senate Democrats Join GOP in Passing $740 Billion Military Spending Bill*. https://www.democracynow.org/2020/7/24/headlines/37_senate_democrats_joining_gop_in_passing_740_billion_military_spending_bill

[309] Democracy Now. (2021, December 16). *Senate approves record $778 billion Pentagon budget*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/12/16/headlines/senate_approves_record_778_billion_pentagon_budget

[310] Democracy Now. (2022, December 9). *House votes overwhelmingly to approve $858 billion military spending bill*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/12/9/headlines/house_votes_overwhelmingly_to_approve_858_billion_military_spending_bill

[311] Zengerle, P. (2022, October 26). *Liberal U.S. lawmakers withdraw Ukraine letter after blowback*. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/world/us-congress-progressives-withdraw-letter-urging-negotiations-end-ukraine-war-2022-10-25/

[312] Democracy Now. (2021, December 9). *"An Outrage": House passes largest military budget in generations despite end of Afghanistan War*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/12/9/biden_military_spending_bill_approval

[313] Wikipedia. (n.d.). *2014 Gaza War*. Retrieved December 15, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Gaza_War

Jerusalem.[314] Even Bernie Sanders, in the early stages of the 2019 Democratic Party presidential primary race, stated that he would "probably not" move the US embassy in Israel back from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv.[315]

In July 2020, the Democratic National Committee voted against proposed language for the party's platform that would have opposed illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and conditioned US aid on Israel ceasing annexation plans.[316] During the 2020 Democratic National Convention, the Biden campaign again denounced the BDS movement.[317] Even "Squad" member Ilhan Omar, the Muslim-American congresswoman who has stood up for Palestinian human rights against the influential American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), appeared to acquiesce by signing an AIPAC letter calling for the extension of a US arms embargo against Iran.[318]

In Sum: Bipartisan Neoliberalism in US Politics

We can summarize this review of neoliberal and/or conservative policy stances of Democratic Party representatives by identifying some of the clearer aspects of policy continuity. With regard to domestic economic policy, the Democratic Party has contributed to neoliberalism by advancing cuts in social welfare (notably, Clinton's "welfare-to-work" reform) and by maintaining limits on crucial public services (especially the lack of universal health care). We have also seen continuity in the political power of Wall Street, with financial sector deregulation under Clinton, the no-strings-attached bank bailout under Obama, and the continued existence of too-big-too-fail banks under the Biden administration. More generally, economic inequality has continued to climb under the leadership of both parties.

In the area of civil rights and liberties, clear examples of bipartisan continuity include the enactment and subsequent re-approvals of the USA PATRIOT Act, mass incarceration, and the persecution of whistleblowers who expose US war crimes or domestic civil liberties violations. With regard to environmental policy, the

[314] Puckett, L. (2019, July 26). *US blocks UN vote to condemn Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes*. The Independent. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-israel-palestine-un-vote-trump-homes-a9020906.html

[315] Abunimah, A. (2019, July 22). *Why is Bernie Sanders still encouraging Israel's crimes?* The Electronic Intifada. https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/why-bernie-sanders-still-encouraging-israels-crimes

[316] Democracy Now. (2020, July 28). *DNC Members Vote to Support Israel's Illegal Annexation of West Bank*. https://www.democracynow.org/2020/7/28/headlines/dnc_members_vote_to_support_israels_illegal_annexation_of_west_bank

[317] Democracy Now. (2020, August 20). *Biden Campaign Attacks Palestinian American Activist Linda Sarsour over Israel Boycott*. https://www.democracynow.org/2020/8/20/headlines/biden_campaign_attacks_palestinian_american_activist_linda_sarsour_over_israel_boycott

[318] Vlahos, K. B. (2020, May 5). *AIPAC Finally Gets the Best of Ilhan Omar*. The American Conservative. https://www.theamericanconservative.com/state-of-the-union/aipac-finally-gets-the-best-of-ilhan-omar/

Democratic Party has failed to advance a Green New Deal, and the Biden administration continues to approve environmentally harmful oil and gas projects contrary to his campaign pledge to prioritize environmental safety and the climate.

In the foreign policy domain, bipartisan consensus is apparent in the approval of increased domestic military spending. We also see some continuities in the treatment of immigrants and asylum seekers (reflected, for instance, by the high deportation rates under Democratic Party administrations). Leaders of both political parties have also meddled in the affairs of nonaligned countries (e.g., Iran, Venezuela, and Cuba) and continue to support human rights-violating allies abroad (e.g., Israel and Saudi Arabia). Both parties have also been complicit in the USA's own human rights violations such as the lack of due process for drone strike targets and Guantanamo Bay detainees.

6.5 Toward a Case for Social Revolution

Social Revolution in the USA Is Justified

In this chapter, I have sought to establish two truths that are crucial to the argument for social revolution in the USA. First, I have attempted to demonstrate that the current landscape of public policy in the USA is morally problematic (i.e., from behind a Rawlsian veil of ignorance) and that there is a need for radical reforms in various policy domains (setting aside, for a moment, the more ambitious revolutionary objectives discussed in Part I and Chap. 7). Second, I have endeavored to show that the reforms needed to adequately rectify the current situation cannot be obtained via the two-party system (this argument is further developed in Chap. 8). Taken together, this chapter has sought to demonstrate that social revolution in the USA is justified.

Elite Versus Pluralist Theoretic Explanations of US Politics

The various policy problems and injustices reviewed in this chapter, and the continuities across major parties within those domains, are arguably sufficient to reveal a bipartisan elite consensus favoring neoliberalism, consistent with the elite theoretic perspective described in the previous chapter. From that perspective, in an unequal democracy (given the plausible link between economic and political inequality), an elite-mass bargaining interaction develops "behind the scenery" of pluralist partisan division.[319] As was acknowledged previously in this chapter,

[319] That is, as wealth inequality increases, it is plausible that the upper classes wield increasingly disproportionate influence over both major parties, while the influence of the average income voter continues to lessen. If so, it is also plausible that a tacit bipartisan consensus favoring upper class interests should develop among political elites, eroding the partisan divide between them while deepening the elite-mass divide.

however, the track record of policy stances reviewed above does not provide unambiguous evidence favoring elite theoretic over pluralist theoretic accounts of US politics.

Cases, where Democratic Party leaders ignore the preferences of their voters, may provide some anecdotal evidence favoring elite theory. For example, recent Pew Research Center surveys showed that a large majority of Democratic survey respondents (88%) favor a single-payer health insurance system,[320] and a federal minimum wage of $15 an hour (87%).[321] And yet, Democratic Party leaders have not vigorously pursued such reforms. However, this invites a plausible rival explanation from the pluralist theoretic perspective: Democratic Party representatives may be pursuing their constituents' interests as well as they can in the context of congressional gridlock, Republican Party obstructionism, and pivotal centrist Democrats' demands.[322] For example, in 1994, "The Clinton camp calculated that the 'only way' to pass health care reform in Congress was for the president to propose 'a relatively detailed and unambiguous' plan for managed competition that offered 'conservative means to liberal ends'" (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000, p. 83).

Gilens and Page (2014) tested elite and pluralist theory using a large dataset of congressional legislation from 1981 to 2002, coding each as favored or opposed by individuals from different income groups using surveys conducted around the time the legislation was considered. They then assessed whether the outcomes tended to favor higher- or lower-income groups in cases where those groups disagreed. They found that higher-income groups had a significant influence on public policy outcomes, while average citizens had little or none. Given a similar survey dataset covering the more recent policy examples reviewed in this chapter, the empirical analysis would, I suspect, show a similar lack of responsiveness to average citizens.

In any event, the purpose of this chapter has not been to test pluralist and elite theories empirically, but rather to demonstrate the moral justification for social revolution in the USA today. The elite cooptation model described in the previous

[320] Jones, B. (2020, September 29). *Increasing share of Americans favor a single government program to provide health care coverage*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/09/29/increasing-share-of-americans-favor-a-single-government-program-to-provide-health-care-coverage/

[321] Dunn, A. (2021, April 22). *Most Americans support a $15 federal minimum wage*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/22/most-americans-support-a-15-federal-minimum-wage/

[322] In a morning newsletter for *The New York Times*, David Leonhardt and Ian Philbrick discussed Congressional Democrats' efforts to advance President Biden's domestic economic agenda in Fall of 2021. They note that several reforms supported by a strong majority of Americans – reducing drug prices, tax increases on the wealthy, expanding Medicare, and more – are nonetheless being compromised away, a stance they refer to as "unpopulism." They attribute such unpopular stances to two factors: (i) the influence of well-financed and well-organized lobbying groups (e.g., PhRMA representing the drug industry) who oppose the popular reforms [an elite theoretic explanation] and (ii) the tendency for members of Congress to mistakenly view the median voter as more fiscally conservative than he/she actually is [a pluralist theoretic explanation]. Leonhardt, D., & Philbrick, I. P. (2021, September 29). *Unpopulism*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/29/briefing/democrats-agenda-biden.html

chapter is more relevant to the question of strategy (Chap. 8) than to the moral justification for revolution (this chapter). After all, even if political leaders are acting in good faith (as pluralist theory holds), the morally problematic public policies (reviewed in this chapter) remain, thus necessitating a revolutionary transformation of US political institutions to reduce gridlock (political realm), diminish the influence of the wealthy (economic realm), and shift the political center of gravity in the progressive direction (cultural realm) (these arguments are developed in the next chapter).

The Moral Obligation of Social Revolution

In his book *The Idea of Justice*, Amartya Sen (2009, pp. 374–6), drawing upon the ideas of Immanuel Kant, distinguishes between, on the one hand, *perfect obligations* not to directly violate someone's rights and, on the other hand, *imperfect obligations* to prevent harm when we are reasonably able to do so. Applied to contemporary US politics, it can be argued that we have a perfect obligation not to directly contribute to the injustices carried out by the US government, as well as an imperfect obligation to minimize the harm of the situation by acting to end those injustices perpetuated by both major political parties in our name. How one goes about fulfilling that imperfect obligation is, of course, an open question. Chapter 8 aims to demonstrate that meeting that obligation will require revolutionary rather than reformist strategies in the current context. Even if many remain blithely content with conventional reformism, my aim here has been to demonstrate a moral obligation of social revolution that one cannot reasonably reject.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that the contemporary landscape of public policy in the USA is deeply problematic and to show that we cannot reasonably expect to achieve the radical reforms needed to rectify the situation via the current two-party system. Indeed, the current situation arose over the course of recent decades despite alternations in power between the two major parties. Even when the Democratic Party had veto-proof majorities in both chambers of Congress, and the presidency, they were unable to fully resolve the aforementioned policy problems (e.g., Obamacare did not achieve universal health insurance or even a public option). Of course, demonstrating the justification for revolutionary change, as I have sought to do in this chapter, still leaves important questions unaddressed, particularly those concerning revolutionary objectives (addressed in Chap. 7) and strategy (addressed in Chap. 8).

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Chapter 7
Revolutionary Objectives



7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter sought to convey the breadth and depth of political and policy problems in the USA and to demonstrate that conventional modes of electoral reformism will not be sufficient to fully resolve those issues, let alone achieve the more ambitious revolutionary objectives described in Part I. Conversely, a successful social revolution would be valuable both for its promotion of equal liberty (as described in Part I) and for advancing solutions to the more specific policy problems reviewed in the previous chapter. As will be explained in Chap. 8, a successful revolutionary movement would achieve radical reforms unwittingly (i.e., as top-down policy concessions) as the movement gained momentum and consciously (i.e., via a democratic transitionary state) after the revolution. Thus, a successful social revolution is not only needed to achieve revolutionary objectives but also to realize urgently needed radical reforms.[1]

[1] Many essential reforms were implied by the policy problems mentioned in the previous chapter. However, it can also be useful to list them more explicitly. For instance, Robert Reich (2015, pp. 191–8, 214) argues that a new broad-based coalition in the USA should seek the following reforms:

- Overturning Citizens United v. FEC and implementing a system of public campaign finance
- Banning political district gerrymandering and eliminating barriers to voting
- Eliminating the revolving door between government and the corporate sector
- Disclosure requirements for Think Tanks
- New regulations on the pharmaceutical industry to bring down prices
- Revitalizing antitrust to reduce the political influence of the wealthy and corporations
- Restoring the Glass-Steagall Act and financial sector regulations
- Stricter bans on insider trading
- Allowing students to declare bankruptcy
- Raising the minimum wage and tying it to inflation
- Empowering workers from various sectors to form unions

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But what should a revolutionary movement strive for beyond specific policy reforms? What ought to be its most basic objectives? As was emphasized in Part I, a successful social revolution would achieve its objectives in the political, economic, and cultural realms, as needed to maximize equal liberty.[2] This chapter discusses those goals as they might be applied to the USA in particular, although some aspects of the discussion have broader relevance as well (e.g., whether or not a country can be considered egalitarian). This chapter begins with a focus on the political realm and, more specifically, post-revolutionary constitutional design. Turning to the socioeconomic realm, this chapter will emphasize the goal of achieving and sustaining an egalitarian (i.e., post-class) society. That will be followed by a look at revolutionary objectives in the cultural realm, focusing especially on the transition to libertarian social democracy and post-imperialism.

7.2 Political Realm

Why Adopt a New US Constitution?

Importance of Revolutionary Success in the Political Realm

A successful social revolution would achieve transformative change in all three realms of social life: political, economic, and cultural. Thus, for example, even if we were able to achieve an egalitarian distribution of wealth as well as a cultural paradigm more conducive to equal liberty, social progress can be stymied by the current political institutions, characterized (in the case of the USA) by multiple veto gates and majoritarian (as opposed to proportional) electoral systems. Adopting the right institutional framework will also make it easier to achieve egalitarianism and a cultural paradigm shift during the revolution and to break through the current impasse in the historical march toward equal liberty.[3]

- More evenhanded trade agreements, including "a world-class re-employment system"
- Ensuring adequate resources for the enforcement of laws and regulations
- Prioritizing educational resources for public schools in poorer districts
- Promoting direct worker ownership of corporations, including cooperatives
- A guaranteed minimum income to increase economic independence

[2] According to Lawson (2019, p. 88), in the near term, revolutionary success is determined by the ability to seize state power long enough to implement revolutionary changes, while in the longer term, revolutionary success involves institutionalizing the new political, economic, and symbolic order. My view corresponds roughly with that understanding, with the caveat added about the potential for revolutionary success without state power. That is, from the perspective of libertarian social democracy, a revolutionary outcome that fully dissolves state power might be equal liberty maximizing, but not necessarily.

[3] Revolutionaries have tended to favor establishing a new state to preserve their movement's achievements (see Eckstrand, 2022, p. 170). Similarly, I will focus below on what a new US constitution might look like after a successful social revolution. However, it should be noted that a decentralized outcome (without a central power) could potentially realize a higher level of equal

The USA Is Due for a New Constitution

Constitutions are documents that establish a basic framework for governance (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 59). Implemented in 1789, the USA has the oldest continuously used written national constitution in the world (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004, p. 130; Taylor et al., 2014, Table 3.1).[4] Thus, even without an extensive list of deeply rooted policy problems (reviewed in Chap. 6) and the desirability of a new paradigm conducive to the advancement of equal liberty (delineated in Part I), it would be timely for the American people to consider a new national constitution.[5] As Christopher Phillips (2011, p. 10) puts it, "[Thomas Jefferson] believed that a constitutional makeover should be undertaken every twenty years […] But better late than never."[6]

Criticisms of the US Constitution

Criticism of the US Constitution is not new, of course. For instance, Levinson (2006, p. 9) suggests that "a substantial responsibility for the defects of our polity lies in the Constitution itself." Paul Street describes the US Constitution as "an archaic and authoritarian straitjacket."[7] According to Domhoff (2006, p. 138), "The Founding Fathers purposely created a system of checks and balances that would keep power within bounds, especially the potential power of an aroused and organized majority of farmers and artisans." A more general critique can be found in political scientist Robert Dahl's 2002 book, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?*

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liberty than a new state, and this possibility should be considered as part of the deliberations among individuals and groups participating in the revolutionary movement.

[4] Other early examples of continuously used national constitutions include those of Norway (1814), Belgium (1831), the Netherlands (1848), and Canada (1867) (Magone, 2019, p. 21; Taylor et al., 2014, Tables 3.1, 3.2).

[5] A potential benefit of a newer constitution is that it can more closely approximate the ideal of achieving widespread consent (in contrast to older constitutions approved by deceased generations). Another downside to having an older constitution is that such documents were designed without the benefit of hindsight – that is, without knowledge of how such institutions have fared in other countries (Taylor et al., 2014, pp. 314–5). A contrary view contends that frequent constitutional changes make it harder to establish a democratic culture. In the words of Magone (2019, p. 21), "One factor that may determine a higher level of democratic culture in any one particular country is the longevity of the constitution." From that perspective, longer lasting constitutions might be preferred to newer ones.

[6] Although Thomas Jefferson owned slaves and held colonialist perspectives (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, p. 3), his call for frequent constitutional change is arguably a useful reference when arguing for revolutionary change in the USA today, so long as the disavowal of racism is clear.

[7] Street, P. (2017, June 11). *Impeach the U.S. Constitution*. Truth Dig. https://www.truthdig.com/articles/impeach-the-u-s-constitution-2/

Focus on the Structure of Government and the Congressional Electoral System

There are various political-institutional changes that could occur as part of a successful revolution, some of which would be recognized in a new constitution. For example, in the case of Tunisia, the most successful revolutionary outcome of the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, "the Ben Ali regime has been ousted, a new constitution is in place, multi-party elections have been held, the military has been confined to the barracks, the political police has been disbanded, and a range of commissions have been established to tackle corruption and related activities" (Lawson, 2019, p. 219).

In this chapter, I will focus primarily on changes in the structure of government as reflected in the national constitution. Adequately resolving the list of policy problems reviewed in the previous chapter and progressing toward a fuller realization of equal liberty will require establishing a new constitution conducive to such ends.[8] A thorough review of the US Constitution is beyond the scope and purpose of this chapter. Thus, for instance, I won't be focusing on the timing of federal elections vis-a-vis state elections, gerrymandering, assembly size, term limits, or characteristics of the judicial system such as common vs. civil law or the election vs. the appointment of judges.[9] In what follows, I will focus on some basic questions concerning the structure of government and the electoral system used for the House of Representatives.

Political Institutions for a New US Constitution: An Overview

Two Dimensions of Democratic Institutions: Federalism-Unitarism and Executives-Parties

In the comparative framework presented by comparative political scientist Arend Lijphart (1999) in his book *Patterns of Democracy*, he makes a broad distinction between consensus and majoritarian types of democracies. In so doing, Lijphart also identifies two separate dimensions of democratic institutions: The federalism-unitarism dimension (concerning different aspects of the structure of government) and the executives-parties dimension (concerning electoral systems and coalition

[8] As a revolutionary mass movement gains momentum, political elites would probably advance a number of policy concessions, potentially even radical reforms, if they felt threatened enough by that movement. As Wetzel (2022, p. 104) observes, "To keep opposition at manageable levels, the state leaders may try to make concessions to mass opinion in periods of rising social strife." However, achieving revolutionary objectives (including the establishment of a new constitution) would be essential for advancing any remaining radical reforms needed to address the various policy problems at their root.

[9] For a comprehensive comparison of these and other topics among the USA and other democracies, see Taylor et al. (2014).

government, among other features). That distinction will help organize the following argument.

Federalism-Unitarism Dimension: Centralist Versus Decentralist Structures

With regard to the federalism-unitarism dimension, it is useful to distinguish between centralist and decentralist structures of government. In comparative political science research, the term *decentralist structure* refers to a system of government with many veto gates – a bicameral legislature, a presidential executive, and a federal separation of powers – while a *centralist structure* refers to a system of government with limited veto gates – a unicameral legislature, a parliamentary executive, and a unitary state.[10] I will argue below that the main advantage of centralist structures of government is not necessarily the achievement of consensus but rather the promotion of positive-sum cooperative outcomes and loyal opposition.

Executives-Parties Dimension: Proportional Versus Majoritarian Electoral Systems

With regard to the executives-parties dimension, one can distinguish between proportional representation (PR) and majoritarian electoral systems used to select members of parliament (discussed below). It will be argued below that the main advantage of PR is that it promotes broad consensus building within a legislative chamber, for instance, by necessitating the formation of multiparty coalition governments.

Centripetal Democracy as a Model for the USA

The term centralist structure is not synonymous with the term centripetal democracy. *Centripetal democracy*, as described by Gerring and Thacker (2008), combines a centralist structure with a PR electoral system. A centripetal democracy should be more consensual within the legislative chamber (due to PR) and more conducive to positive-sum outcomes and loyal opposition (given the centralist structure). Below, I will argue for a more centripetal style of democracy within the USA, including a transition from presidentialism to parliamentarism, from bicameralism to unicameralism, and from a majoritarian to a more proportional electoral system. However, I will also argue that a federal structure should be maintained. I begin with a discussion about centralist and decentralist structures (the federalism-unitarism

[10] Taylor et al. (2014) distinguish between *veto gates* (e.g., an upper legislative chamber, the presidency, and subnational polities) and *veto players* (e.g., a party whose consent is required to advance a bill within a single legislative chamber).

dimension), followed by my argument for electoral system change (the executives-parties dimension).

Toward a More Centralist Structure of Government

Decentralism

Decentralist Institutions

Decentralist institutions are characterized by separations of power, or "veto gates" (legislative chambers, the executive branch, and subnational polities), as well as "veto players" (i.e., pivotal parties and representatives) within each location. The advancement of legislation usually requires majority support within and across those separate locations, often necessitating negotiation across parties. Thus, veto gates are viewed as a characteristic of consensus democracy (Lijphart, 1999).

However, the presence of many veto gates can also make it difficult to implement even moderate reforms (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 358). For example, in the context of the George Floyd protests in June 2020, House Democrats drafted legislation advancing several progressive reforms to be applied to local policing, but Republican Party leaders in the Senate indicated that they would not take up the legislation, while Senate Democrats refused to take up the Republican version, arguing it was insufficient.[11] In March 2021, the House passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, but the bill failed to acquire Senate Republican support in September 2021.[12] In political science, this phenomenon is sometimes referred to as gridlock.[13]

Cultural Fear of Faction

The cultural dimension of a decentralist democracy is characterized by a fear of faction and a lack of trust in the government. Such a culture promotes zero-sum bargaining interactions and (potentially destabilizing) partisan polarization. The cultural norm is to subjectively view governments as pursuing narrow interests (i.e., governing parties are viewed as *factions* – groups of individuals seeking to further

[11] Associated Press. (2020, June 24). *Senate Democrats Block GOP Police Bill, Calling It Insufficient*. The Dallas Morning News. https://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/2020/06/24/senate-democrats-block-gop-police-reform-bill-calling-it-insufficient/

[12] Democracy Now. (2021, September 23). *Police Reform Legislation Collapses after Bipartisan Talks Fail to Reach Agreement*. https://www.democracynow.org/2021/9/23/headlines/police_reform_legislation_collapses_after_bipartisan_talks_fail_to_reach_agreement

[13] Binder, S. A. (2000, December 1). *Going Nowhere: A Gridlocked Congress*. Brookings Institute. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/going-nowhere-a-gridlocked-congress/

some private or narrow interest[14]), and majoritarian outcomes are viewed as serving narrow interests, reinforcing partisan polarization.

James Madison saw factions as inevitable in a free society, and thus argued for institutional designs – "auxiliary precautions" – that would force factions to bargain with each other and arrive at legislative outcomes in the broader public interest. As Taylor et al. (2014, p. 9) observe, "[Madison] took for granted that representatives would be self-interested. Therefore, it was necessary that 'ambition must be made to counteract ambition' (Federalist 51) via proper institutional arrangement."

There is, of course, some truth to the argument that people naturally tend to prioritize their own self-interest over the public good. However, if the fear of faction is exaggerated and becomes a cultural characteristic, it can undermine the trust in government essential to deliberative democracy.[15] That is, if actors are persistently on guard against faction (a disposition reinforced by decentralist institutions), this would seem to undermine social trust, and as Daniel Bell (1999, p. 73) states in his writing on deliberative democracy, "There is not much point discussing things if people don't trust each other." According to Sheldon Wolin (2008, p. 266), "Trust is the precondition of an authentic politics. An authentic politics is not univocal; there will always be contested views about actuality, and how it is to be understood and acted upon. But it makes a great deal of difference if the parties concerned can assume that each has made a good-faith effort to speak truthfully."

Decentralist Equilibrium: A Vicious Cycle

In a decentralist democracy, excessive distrust in representatives can become self-fulfilling if a low-trust equilibrium sets in. In that case, decentralist institutions create a "shadow of the future" in which governments are expected to pursue their own narrow (zero-sum) interests and the opposition is expected to do the same when they are in power. Legislative outcomes will tend to serve narrow interests rather than providing diffuse (public) benefits. Thus, rights violations might be more egregious in a decentralist setting when the same party controls all the veto gates (Przeworski, 2019, p. 6). Consensual outcomes will tend to reflect a Rousseauian "will of all" (aggregation of complementary narrow interests) rather than a "general will" (common national interest) (Rousseau, 1987 [1762], Book II, Ch. 3). In sum, decentralist institutions solidify a vicious cycle in which a cultural fear of faction reinforces

[14] In line with this definition, according to Althusius (1995 [1614], p. 181), "A *faction* is a conspiracy or union of a few or of many in dissension with other citizens."

[15] If people did naturally tend toward faction (as James Madison argued), a stronger case for decentralist institutions could be made. However, consistent with the normally distributed ("bell curve") view of human nature described in Chap. 3, a more moderate constitution (along the spectrum from centralism to decentralism) seems most conducive to the pursuit of equal liberty: It still includes some safeguards against faction, yet also allows for and promotes the idea that people are capable of pursuing the common good from behind a veil of ignorance (and thus should be *empowered* to govern by centralist institutions).

support for decentralist institutions, yielding zero-sum policy outcomes that, in turn, reinforce the fear of faction.

Centralism

Centralist Institutions

In a centralist institutional setting, legislative progress requires consensus building among the governing parties, and legislation is usually approved by simple majority. As Taylor et al. (2014, p. 358) observe, "In countries with a single veto gate but a coalition government [such as New Zealand], the one gate is able to be opened only when two or more transacting parties consent to change." However, there should be less gridlock in such settings, as the governing coalition does not need the approval of an upper legislative chamber, a president, or subnational governments. Broader consensus within the parliament is a deliberative goal but is not necessarily required to pass legislation.

Culture of Trust

In contrast to the fear of faction reinforced by decentralist structures of government, centralist democratic cultures are characterized by a deliberative trust in government. This characteristic promotes cooperation (leading to positive-sum outcomes) and "loyal opposition" (which stabilizes the democratic system). In contrast to decentralist institutions, centralist institutional designs with limited veto gates (such as parliamentary unicameral systems) are premised on the idea that governments can be trusted to pursue the public good and should thus be *empowered* to govern (Mansbridge, 2012).

Centralist Outcomes

The cultural trust in representatives can become self-fulfilling if the benefits of a virtuous cycle create a positive-sum equilibrium. In that case, centralist institutions create a "shadow of the future" in which governments are reluctant to pursue narrow (zero-sum) interests because the opposition can "get even" when they are in power, potentially undermining the trust-based equilibrium and its diffuse (public) benefits. Thus, majorities often constrain themselves in centralist democracies such as the UK and Sweden (Przeworski, 2019, p. 6). Under centralist institutions in a culture of trust, consensual outcomes reflect a Rousseauian "General Will" of common national interest. In sum, centralist structures of government stabilize a virtuous political cycle in which a culture of deliberative trust allows for the creation of centralist institutions, in turn yielding positive-sum outcomes that reinforce the deliberative democratic culture.

Other Benefits of Centralism

There are a few other benefits of centralist institutions in addition to positive-sum outcomes and democratic stability. For instance, eliminating the presidential and senate vetoes should make it easier to enact a radical agenda as part of the revolutionary transformation and to empower policymakers in the post-revolution context as well. In addition to the benefits of legislative expediency, an empirical study by Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz found that countries with fewer veto gates tend to have lower levels of socioeconomic inequality (MacLean, 2017, p. 226).

Also, centralist institutional designs make it easier for voters to hold their representatives accountable, as there are fewer decision-making locations to consider (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 358). Similarly, Drutman (2020, p. 222) observes that "In the United States, divided government and separation of powers fundamentally blur accountability: Which party should voters hold accountable?" By contrast, in a more centralist democratic setting, it should be relatively clear which actors are responsible for different pieces of legislation, all else being equal.

From Presidentialism to Parliamentarism

The Executive Branch and Democratic Freedoms

Presidentialism Encourages Tyrannical Behavior

A basic choice, with regard to the structure of government, is between a presidential and a parliamentary system. One reason to favor parliamentary over presidential systems is that the latter seems to invite tyrannical behavior within the executive branch. For example, in his book *Democracy For The Few*, Michael Parenti (2011, pp. 225–31) describes US presidents as "would-be absolutist monarchs," highlighting several extra-constitutional prerogatives presidents have taken advantage of. This includes the withholding of information "on everything from undeclared wars to illegal campaign funds and burglaries (Watergate)," executive orders and rule by decree, nonenforcement and unilateral decisions, presidential signing statements,[16] the unitary executive theory (a euphemism for autocracy, according to Parenti), regular violations of the War Powers Act of 1973 (which sought to reassert congressional authority), and Executive Agreements, which allow the president to circumvent the Senate's constitutional power to ratify treaties.[17] To this, we might also add

[16] According to Wolin (2008, p. 236), President George W. Bush took the practice of signing statements "and converted it into a sweeping claim that he can ignore provisions of a bill with which he disagrees."

[17] A recent example of a US president using their powers in an authoritarian fashion is arguably Trump's placement of federal agents in Portland to police the Black Lives Matter protests in Summer 2020. For a discussion of that topic, see Goitein, E. (2020, June 2). *Yes, Trump can deploy*

the expansion of executive power reflected in the targeting of civil rights groups by agencies such as the FBI, for example, during the Cointelpro operations of the 1960s.[18]

Examples of presidential abuse of power can also be found in other countries. For example, in Peru, "Although Fujimori initially governed within the framework of the 1979 constitution, he also relied heavily on claims of decree powers to counter potential legislative opposition to the austerity program that he announced unexpectedly following his election victory" (Haggard & Kaufman, 2016, p. 284). Another recent example of expanding presidential powers is found in Venezuela, where Hugo Chavez expanded his decree powers, limited the autonomy of the central bank, put himself in charge of managing international reserves of oil, seized control of telecommunications, energy, and banking, and abolished term limits in 2009 via a constitutional referendum (ibid, pp. 327–8). Meanwhile in Russia, Vladimir Putin placed new limits on public assemblies, adopted an expanded legal definition of treason that included human rights activism, and expanded control of internet content and foreign-owned media (ibid, p. 332).

Parliamentarism Is Not a Panacea

Of course, prime ministers in parliamentary settings can exhibit tyrannical tendencies as well. For example, before he became president of Turkey in 2014, prime minister Recep Erdogan organized a wave of arrests and trials of journalists, bureaucrats, and other military officers unfairly suspected of being part of a planned coup attempt while openly criticizing the Constitutional Court (Haggard & Kaufman, 2016, p. 335). As another example, "After his 2010 victory, Hungary's [prime minister] Viktor Orbán reshaped the constitutional court, retired hundreds of judges, and – one year after his election – adopted a new constitution" (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, p. 123). More generally, "parties in parliamentary systems tend to be hierarchically organized themselves, given that [party leaders] nominate candidates, organize the legislature, and seek to appoint their leaders to cabinet" (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 186). Democratic stability is not guaranteed by parliamentarism, nor is it necessarily doomed by presidentialism (Linz, 1994). However, overall, executive authoritarian tendencies should be stronger in presidential than in parliamentary systems.

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troops to suppress protests. The Boston Globe. https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/06/02/opinion/yes-trump-can-deploy-troops-suppress-protests/

[18] For a review of mid-twentieth-century Cointelpro activities, the Church Committee Report (particularly Book II) is a useful resource. United States Senate. (1976, April 26). *Report of Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 94th Congress*. Retrieved July 26, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_Committee

Parliamentarism Empowers People More than Presidentialism

In his book *The Development of the Modern State*, Gianfranco Poggi (1978, p. 112) observed that parliament "represents the public realm par excellence." Compared with presidential systems, parliamentary systems tip the legislative-executive balance of power more toward the legislature (or less far toward the executive[19]). Making a similar point in *Federalist 51*, Madison observed that "In republican government, the legislative authority necessarily predominates." Moreover, anarchistic political institutions should arguably tilt the balance of power between the legislative and executive branches even further in the legislature's direction and thus prefer parliamentary over presidential systems.

Other Advantages of Parliamentarism

In contrast to presidential systems where the legislature and executive are elected separately and can be controlled by different parties, in parliamentary systems, the leaders of the largest legislative party (and any other coalition parties) form a governing cabinet that can, at least in theory, be brought down via a legislative vote of no confidence. Presidential systems are characterized by more rigid terms of office for the head of government than under parliamentarism, as the parliamentary vote of no confidence is easier to use than a presidential impeachment (Linz, 1994). By eliminating the presidency (and presidential elections), a parliamentary system might also reduce voter fatigue (as voters will not need to learn about presidential candidates) and thus increase voter turnout (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 151).

Presidentialism also contributes to partisan polarization. For instance, presidential elections contribute to the consolidation of the two-party system as individuals are drawn toward one of the two major parties' candidates (Domhoff, 2006, p. 137). In addition, presidential elections create a zero-sum, winner-takes-all situation, in that the presidential election winner's party can form the governing cabinet on its own (since it doesn't need support from a parliamentary majority to remain in power), thus increasing political tensions between opposing camps (Linz, 1994). Furthermore, the loser of a presidential election has no political status, in contrast to a parliamentary system where the loser goes on to become the leader of the opposition in parliament (Przeworski, 1991, p. 34).

[19] In parliamentary systems, legislatures tend to be "policy influencing" rather than "policymaking," as the governing cabinet is responsible for drafting and introducing legislation. By contrast, given the independence of the US Congress from the Presidency, the Congress can be described as "policy making" (Magone, 2019, pp. 176–7). Although legislatures may have more independence to introduce legislation in a presidential system, the presidential veto still places a severe constraint on legislative power, while the "vote of no confidence" in a parliamentary system constrains the executive in parliamentary systems.

In Sum: The Benefits of Parliamentarism

It has been argued that parliamentarism has three advantages over presidentialism: democratic freedoms, democratic stability, and being less polarizing than presidentialism. Prominent arguments for parliamentarism can be found in US history, suggesting that the idea is not incompatible with US culture. An early example of parliamentarism in US political thought was James Madison's Virginia Plan, presented at the Philadelphia Convention of 1787, which "would have more resembled the fusion-of-powers system we see in parliamentary systems, rather than the separation-of-power systems that emerged from the deliberations" (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 31). Also noteworthy, Woodrow Wilson, before becoming president, argued in favor of a parliamentary system in his 1885 book, *Congressional Government*.[20]

From Bicameralism to Unicameralism

Subnational Representation

Subnational Units Are Often Overrepresented in the Upper Legislative Chamber

Another way to move toward a more centralist structure of government is to eliminate the Senate and/or its veto powers. In general, there are at least two basic arguments in favor of bicameralism. One such argument is that the upper chamber provides an assembly for representatives from the subnational territories (Clark et al., 2013, p. 705). For example, the upper legislative chamber provides regional representation in countries such as Germany, Belgium (more recently), and, of course, the USA.[21]

Federal systems, which tend to be bicameral, often create tension with the principle of one person, one vote, in that the less populous subunits tend to be overrepresented in the upper chamber (Taylor et al., 2014, pp. 75–6). The US Senate, for example, (and the electoral college used in presidential elections) are often criticized on those grounds. For instance, Hacker and Pierson (2020, p. 188) observe that, in the USA, "Senate malapportionment has become a GOP bulwark that has much the same effect as gerrymandering and voter restrictions." However, the one-person-one-vote principle is not necessarily violated in that way, as some federal states (e.g., Canada and India) achieve a distribution of seats in their upper chamber more proportional to each subunit's population (Taylor et al., 2014, Fig. 4.3).

[20] Francis, D. (2019, October 18). *Parliament Over Presidents*. The American Interest. https://www.the-american-interest.com/2019/10/18/parliament-over-presidents/

[21] In the USA, state powers are recognized in the 10th Amendment of the federal constitution, which reads: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people."

Subnational Representation Is Possible Without an Upper Chamber

There may be other institutional designs besides an upper legislative chamber that can ensure adequate representation of the subnational territories. For instance, the large, multimember districts of a proportional representation (PR) system could be drawn coterminous with subnational boundaries. For example, Venezuela is one of the few federal systems with a unicameral national legislature. In 2020, deputies to their National Assembly were elected via a mixed-member majoritarian system. Each of the 24 state boundaries also outlined a multimember district (ranging from three to ten seats), from which a total of 144 delegates were chosen via closed-list PR. Each state also had anywhere from three to 15 single-member districts, from which 133 delegates were chosen via simple plurality.[22]

Legislative Review

Improving the Quality of Legislation

The second basic argument in favor of bicameralism is that it improves the quality of legislation (Clark et al., 2013, p. 705). Senators are sometimes viewed as having the advantage of greater independence and experience than members of the lower chamber. For instance, the Canadian Senate was described as a chamber of "sober second thought," by John MacDonald, Canada's first prime minister. In Norway, "Two of the main reasons for establishing a two-chamber system was to create a proper impeachment procedure and a thorough legislative process scrutinized by both houses" (Magone, 2019, p. 182). Ideally, such upper chamber review processes would improve the quality of legislation.

Counterarguments

There are a couple potentially strong counterarguments to this defense of upper chamber legislative review. First, in practice, upper chambers often take a reactionary position on progressive public policy. For example, the US Senate has a history of slowing progress on civil rights and workers' rights.[23] And, while it is not necessarily the case, upper legislative chambers may overrepresent the wealthy. For example, Przeworski (2019, p. 201) describes the US Senate as a "millionaires club." Second, bicameralism can potentially be used by elites "to safeguard their interests on the eve of democratization" (Albertus & Menaldo, 2018, p. 91).

[22] Wikipedia. (n.d.). *2020 Venezuelan parliamentary election*. Retrieved June 20, 2022, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_Venezuelan_parliamentary_election#Electoral_system

[23] Perlman, D., & Jordan, A. (2021, June 8). *Why we should abolish the Senate*. Counter Punch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/06/08/why-we-should-abolish-the-senate/

Consistent with that argument, after Sweden eliminated its upper chamber in 1970, inequality declined in the country (ibid, Fig. 6.3; Sigman & Lindberg, 2019, Fig. 3).

In Sum: The Benefits of Unicameralism

In my view, the argument in favor of unicameralism is not as clear-cut as that favoring a transition to parliamentarism. Do the benefits of having a Senate (subnational representation and the refinement of legislation) outweigh its downsides (slowing social progress and safeguarding elite power)? As was mentioned above, an upper chamber is not necessarily needed to provide adequate representation to the subnational territories. However, one might also prefer a territorially based upper chamber without veto power, as is found in Austria, Belgium, and Spain (Taylor et al., 2014, Table 10.3). Even this would be a radical shift from the status quo in the USA, where, "in some ways, the Senate is even more powerful than the House of Representatives" (ibid, p. 207). At a minimum, it would seem necessary to eliminate the filibuster and to allocate Senate seats in a more proportional manner to eliminate malapportionment.

Regarding the argument for upper chamber legislative review, a successful social revolution would help ensure that representatives were, in fact, pursuing the public interest in good faith and, in that sense, trustworthy. Under those circumstances, because reactionary and/or self-interested tendencies would be minimized, the Senate could conceivably help improve legislation by ensuring that public preferences are fully accounted for. Still, the downsides of bicameralism arguably outweigh its benefits, especially when concerns about decentralism (discussed above) are taken into account. Furthermore, the fact that unicameralism has been used at the state level suggests that the idea is not incompatible with US culture.[24]

Maintaining a Federal System

What Is Federalism and Unitarism?

In *Politica*, Althusius (1995 [1614], pp. 39–45) described federal organization as "an inclusive political order" bringing together family (private), the city ("a body of many and diverse associations"), the metropolis ("the mother of other cities"), and outward to the provincial and universal levels. More concisely (and recently), Taylor et al. (2014, p. 85) define *federalism* as a system with multiple levels of sovereignty. Under *unitarism*, by contrast, the subunits "simply administer the policies created and handed down by the central government." Treisman (2007, Table 2.1) defines

[24] Historically, among the first generation of state-level constitutions in the USA, those of Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Vermont were unicameral (Smith & Greenblatt, 2014, p. 66). Currently, the assembly of the State of Nebraska is unicameral as well.

federal political systems as characterized by (i) decentralized decision-making (where "at least one subnational tier of government has exclusive authority to make decisions on at least one policy issue") and decentralized appointment processes (where "government officials at one or more subnational tiers are selected by local residents"). I will begin with a discussion about federalism and progressive decentralization, followed by a consideration of federalism's impact on a culture of trust.

Federalism and Progressive Decentralization

Decentralization and Progress Toward Anarchy

As was discussed in Chap. 2, decentralization can be viewed as one of the main elements of gradualist anarchism (the other two being just law and consensus). Federalism – that is, the decentralization of power to the subnational level – was supported by such anarchists as Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin.[25] On the other hand, according to Uri Gordon (2008, p. 155), "the number of states in the world adds or subtracts nothing from anarchists' assessment of how closely the world corresponds to their ideals."

As was explained in a Chap. 1 footnote, I assume that decentralization (from a central to a mid- or local level) is inherently more conducive to individual autonomy than keeping sovereignty entirely at the central level, despite falling short of individual sovereignty (i.e., anarchy). It was argued that, because the subnational units will tend to have less variance in their ideological distribution (i.e., more homogeneity of policy preferences) than at the national level, the average ideological distance between representative and citizen will be smaller as one scales down from the central to increasingly local levels.

Unitarism: Riskier "Big Steps" of Decentralization

Is unitarism or federalism more conducive to the gradualist anarchist goal of progressive (i.e., equal liberty maximizing) decentralization, as described in Chap. 2? Unitary states tend to be smaller than federal states, both geographically and with regard to population size (Taylor et al., 2014, Fig. 4.2). Although unitary states are "closer" to individual autonomy (in that they would involve one large decentralizing step from central to local government), unitary nation-states may be geographically

[25] Similar to the idea of federalism, the principle of subsidiarity, supported in the nineteenth century by Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin and today enshrined in the founding documents of the European Union, calls for maximizing local decision-making autonomy in public affairs. Even so, Colin Ward wrote that "we are still very far from a Europe of the Regions," adding that, "the obstacle […] is the nation state." Ward, C. (1992). *The Anarchist Sociology of Federalism*. Nothingness Archive. Retrieved August 11, 2021, from http://library.nothingness.org/articles/anar/en/display/334

larger than the subnational units of federal states, making this a riskier step with regard to whether decentralization will yield a net gain in equal liberty. That is, whether the decentralized counterfactual will yield a higher level of equal liberty than the centralized state may be harder to gauge when taking "big" decentralizing steps (i.e., from a more remotely located center of power). By contrast, federal systems are arguably more conducive to the goal of consolidating gains in equal liberty, as the more numerous tiers of government facilitate smaller evolutionary steps along the path to anarchy.[26]

Federalism has the potential downside of "allowing elites who reside in the periphery to win power, set their own policies, and keep any national-level policies that challenge their influence at bay" (Albertus & Menaldo, 2018, p. 90). In a similar vein, James Madison argued in *The Federalist Papers* that subnational polities tended to be more homogenous, making it easier for a single faction to form a majority and act tyrannically toward the minority (Drutman, 2020, p. 21). States that are unitary but decentralized can also empower elites. For example, after Sweden's initial transition to popular democracy in the early twentieth century, "decentralization strengthened the political hand of local aristocrats, particularly in the countryside, where landowners remained quite powerful" (Albertus & Menaldo, 2018, p. 191).

Federalism Is Arguably More Conducive to Progressive Decentralization

Ultimately, subnational governments are just as likely to abuse the rights of their citizens as they are to protect them (Treisman, 2007, p. 13). As was discussed in Chap. 2, the goal of gradualist anarchism is to decentralize power when this will yield a higher level of equal liberty than the centralized counterfactual. That may be harder to gauge when taking big decentralizing steps. Especially in a geographically large polity such as the USA, federalism arguably strikes a proper balance between an excessively centralized unitary state, on the one hand, and premature decentralization, on the other. That is, federalism might correspond best to the gradualist anarchist positions on the "centralization question" discussed in Chap. 4.

[26] A potential critique of this vision is that, even after a successful social revolution, it would be difficult for a democratic polity to act swiftly, as one, to make as many political decisions as are implied by the vision of anarchism described in this book. A rejoinder to that critique might highlight the expedited collective decision among the *demos* in a unicameral parliamentary setting. Another possibility that might be explored is internet voting, which, should (given a reduction in the cost of voting) make it easier to achieve widespread political participation on a regular basis. For example, during the 2000 Arizona Democratic Party primary, given the options of voting by mail, in-person, or online, most voters cast a ballot online, and the election saw a record increase in turnout, especially among the young (James, 2012, p. 35). In 2007, Estonia became the first nation-state to hold binding parliamentary elections through the Internet. "Academic observers suggested that the scheme [in Estonia] did appear to work well, but this was due to the small size of the state, the high degree of centralization, and the less partisan nature of elections" (ibid, p. 1).

Would Federalism Undermine a Culture of Trust?

Subnational Autonomy

Maintaining a federal structure of government will ensure that subnational regions (e.g., states in the USA) have a certain degree of autonomy, even if they lack an upper legislative chamber at the national level.[27] Because a federal structure would preserve some subnational veto power, national governments should be more sensitive to the regional interests of those polities. This also helps address the aforementioned concern about the underrepresentation of subnational regions under a unicameral system. Other potential benefits of federalism concern policy innovation, such as the assertion that federalism promotes specialization ("laboratories of democracy") and competition amongst each other ("voting with your feet") (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 97).

Intergovernmental Cooperation

In a federal system, subnational governments may have to cooperate with the national government over policy implementation, design, and budgeting. For example, with regard to welfare programs in the USA such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), states have some leeway to determine eligibility and specific benefits (Taylor et al., 2014, pp. 87–8). On the other hand, federalism can also institutionalize tensions between the national government and the subnational units. For example, in the USA, the scope of congressional power to regulate interstate commerce (Article I, Section 8) has often been contested (ibid, pp. 41–2). And, as with decentralist systems more generally, "the more veto gates involved in policy making, the more difficult it is to make the policy in the first place, as well as it is to implement it" (ibid, p. 324).

One of the benefits of a federal structure of government, even within the virtuous cycle of an otherwise centralist institutional setting, is that it can provide an "auxiliary precaution" against any remaining factional tendencies. Federal auxiliary precautions may be a good idea because, even within a culture of trust, governing majorities can potentially prioritize their own narrow interests over the national welfare. At such times, a federal structure can help maintain the virtuous cycle by allowing subnational governments to gently resist unjust federal laws, either by withdrawing cooperation (e.g., refusing to implement the law) or by promoting changes to them.

[27] Another interesting question that is not addressed here but that might be considered part of the revolutionary project is whether the current set of boundaries among the 50 states should be kept intact or altered, either fundamentally or in more minor ways. Such matters could be deliberated on in independent revolutionary assemblies (discussed in Chap. 8). For a brief discussion of the topic, see De Chant, Tim. (2011, November 16). *Redrawing the United States of America*. Scientific American. https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/redrawing-the-united-states-of-america/

Although federalism is a decentralist institution, its detrimental impact on the culture of trust could be counterbalanced by centralist institutions (unicameral parliamentarism) within the federal and/or subnational governments. For instance, one might favor a federal parliamentary system with a Senate for territorial representation (but without veto power and with seats allocated so as to avoid malapportionment). Meanwhile, the subnational states would be purely centralist democracies (unitary, unicameral, and parliamentary systems). That would make sense as the states are already unitary (as confirmed by "Dillon's Rule," although some cities adopt Home Rule charters).

In Sum: The Benefits of Federalism

I have argued that a federal structure would be more conducive to progressive decentralization than unitarism and that, despite the decentralist nature of federalism, the benefits of providing some auxiliary precaution against "the mischiefs of faction" will outweigh the downside of eroding cultural trust. Also, because federalism is deeply rooted in US history, placing it prominently among the goals of the revolution could help persuade others to support the cause.[28] Having discussed the broader structure of government (the federalism-unitarism dimension) for a new US constitution, I turn next to the topic of electoral systems (the executives-parties dimension).

Electoral and Party Systems

Why Focus on Electoral Systems?

The importance of electoral systems has been emphasized by several political scientists. For example, according to Lijphart (2008, p. 78), "The most important choice facing constitution writers is that of a legislative electoral system." As another example, Donovan and Bowler (2004, p. 6) explain that "electoral institutions are of primary importance partly because they help to define what a democracy is and also because they ultimately shape who serves in office, who has influence, and who has power in the political system." Similarly, Taylor et al. (2014, p. 115) write, "the electoral system, that is, the rules used to translate votes into elected office, is the fundamental basis of the principle-agent relationship between

[28] I don't intend to discuss here the different types of federalism that have been identified throughout US history: dual, cooperative or "marble-cake," centralized, or new federalism (see Smith & Greenblatt, 2014, Ch. 2 for a discussion).

voters and politicians." In what follows, I will argue for a closed party-list proportional representation (PR) system.[29]

Proportional Representation in the USA

There is very little debate in the USA about fundamental changes to the electoral system for congressional or even state legislative elections (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 143). Although it is rarely advocated in US political discourse, PR is not a totally new idea in the country. Thomas Jefferson designed a method for distributing US congressional seats among the states similar to the D'Hondt method used to allocate legislative seats in some PR systems. Also, lawyer and statesman Daniel Webster designed a system mathematically equivalent to another PR formula known as the Sainte-Laguë method (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 46).

Political scientist Douglas Amy (1993, p. 210) notes that PR was adopted by many US cities during the early twentieth century, prompted by a "citizen revolt against politics as usual." For example, between 1915 and 1948, 24 cities in the USA adopted the single-transferable vote system (STV, a type of PR), including Sacramento, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and New York City (Drutman, 2020, p. 186). These PR systems were mostly abandoned, however, because of "the threat it posed to established political interests" (Amy, 1993, p. 11). Today, STV is still used to elect the city council of Cambridge, Massachusetts, as well as school boards in New York City and Minneapolis (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 142). The Democratic Party also uses PR to allocate delegates among its presidential candidates in all 50 states, as does the Republican Party in some states (ibid, p. 274).

The Benefits of Proportional Representation

A New Multiparty System

According to Duverger's Law, majoritarian electoral systems (i.e., those with single-seat districts) such as single-member district plurality (SMDP) should tend toward a two-party system. By contrast, proportional electoral systems (i.e., those with more than one seat per district) such as party-list PR allow both major and minor parties to gain seats in the legislature, with each receiving a share of seats proportional to their share of the popular vote.[30] Maurice Duverger argued that PR would

[29] Under closed-list PR systems, voters simply choose their preferred political party. By contrast, in an open-list PR system, voters choose their preferred political party and can also rank-order candidates from that party list on the ballot. However, I tend to favor closed-list over open-list systems, as the latter incentivizes the pursuit of narrow interests among candidates who compete for name recognition.

[30] Duverger's Law emphasizes two mechanisms. First, the "mechanical effect" of electoral systems concerns how votes are translated into seats. Especially important in that regard is the district

be a good idea for the US Congress since our two major parties are "mere receptacles containing too haphazard a mixture of different elected members to properly represent the diverse tendencies of public opinion" (quoted in Donovan & Bowler, 2004, p. 69).[31]

The adoption of PR in the USA would most likely give rise to a multiparty system, breaking the current two-party duopoly (Drutman, 2020).[32] Contrasting the US SMDP system with the Italian PR system, Douglas Amy (1993, p. 79) writes, "While the Republicans and Democrats huddle together in the middle right of the political spectrum, Italian parties [elected by PR] range all the way from the far right to the far left and almost everywhere in between." Recent studies have also found that the congruence between citizens' ideological preferences and legislators' policy stances is no greater under majoritarian electoral systems (such as SMDP) than under PR (e.g., Ferland, 2020).

Greater Inclusivity Under a Multiparty System

Under PR, minor parties such as the Green Party and the Libertarian Party would most likely each gain a bloc of congressional seats, and perhaps even join a multiparty governing coalition, as is common in countries with more proportional electoral systems, such as Germany (Drutman, 2020). Crucially, allowing smaller parties to acquire seats in the legislature would also integrate into legislative debates views inadequately represented by the Democratic and Republican parties today.[33]

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magnitude (i.e., the number of seats per legislative district). For instance, under SMDP, the candidate with the largest popular vote share acquires the seat. By contrast, under party-list PR, geographically large multimember districts are used, allowing for a more proportional distribution of seats across parties. The second is the "psychological effect" of electoral systems. For instance, the mechanical effect of SMDP systems causes voters to choose one of the two major party candidates to avoid the spoiler effect, where voting for the most preferred minor party candidate actually helps the less preferred major party candidate. By contrast, under a party-list PR system, voters feel freer to vote for their most preferred party (even a minor one).

[31] For a discussion about the rifts within the Democratic and Republican parties in the context of the 2016 presidential primary race, see: Zogby, J. (2016, February 19). *The Possible End of Both Political Parties*. Forbes. http://www.forbes.com/sites/johnzogby/2016/02/19/democrats-and-republicans-rip/

[32] According to Singer (1999, p. 256), "In the United States […] there is one party in two reincarnations, and everything is being done, by law and otherwise, to prevent a third one from disturbing the consensus." In the USA, the SMDP "winner-takes-all" electoral system has provided stability to the two-party system since the second party system broke down in the 1850s (Oestreicher, 1988). Other barriers to third-party development include state-level rules limiting access to the ballot (Schubert et al., 2014, p. 144), and the ability of the major parties to coopt the electorate's changing views (Reich, 2015, p. 189).

[33] In a similar vein, Glen Greenwald explains that "Allowing third parties and four-party candidates into the debate, who would then call into question US posture toward Israel or the drug war or the criminal justice system or a whole variety of other issues where both parties agree, including trade, would open up the range of issues that Americans start questioning and start thinking about and start challenging, that they never think about now because the two major parties agree." Greenwald,

In addition, by allowing more parties to acquire seats in the legislature, citizens will feel better represented and will be more likely to turn out to vote (Disch, 2002; Drutman, 2020).[34] Various positions on the "centralization question" (discussed in Chap. 4) could also be represented. Furthermore, given the relative ease of winning legislative seats in a PR system, policymakers may be less tempted to adjust election administration rules to hold onto power (James, 2012, p. 226).

A More Consensual Style of Politics

A related benefit of PR and multiparty systems is that they are more conducive to deliberation and consensus building on progressive social policies than majoritarian systems such as SMDP (Lijphart, 1999; Steiner et al., 2004; Drutman, 2020). For example, New Zealand's transition from SMDP to a PR system in the mid-1990s was followed by an increase in supermajority legislative vote outcomes (Williams, 2012). As another example, the post-World War I institutional reforms in The Netherlands, including the adoption of PR, coincided with the resolution of issues such as the funding of faith-based private schools (Magone, 2019, p. 78). Under Austria's PR electoral system, "The need to keep a broad absolute majority through a coalition of parties leads to a culture of consensus and compromise" (ibid, pp. 191–2). Moreover, researchers at FiveThirtyEight found that countries with more proportional electoral systems tend to generate less animosity toward opposing parties and warmer feelings toward one's own party.[35]

Thus, what policy problems were not solved in the buildup to, or midst of the social revolution could be dealt with more consensually afterward under PR. For instance, campaign finance reform might be achieved more easily under a multiparty system (Drutman, 2020, p. 203). In a similar vein, Piketty (2020, p. 957) observes that "it is impossible to reduce inequality as much as one would like without also transforming the political, institutional, and electoral regimes." More generally, Gerring and Thacker (2008, p. 40) write, "the most effective way to mediate

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G. (2016, August 31). *A New McCarthyism: Greenwald on Clinton Camp's Attempts to Link Trump, Stein & WikiLeaks to Russia*. Democracy Now. http://www.democracynow.org/2016/8/31/a_new_mccarthyism_greenwald_on_clinton

[34] It will be argued in the next chapter that, under a ruling class (as in the USA today), voter turnout is problematic in that it shores up legitimacy for the political system. However, this same problem will not exist in the aftermath of a successful social revolution, at which time voter turnout would be more conducive to equal liberty. In a similar vein, discussing how a truly socialist society might function, Sam Gindin refers to "contested elections revolving around a future direction which – because of its importance and genuine openness to public direction – would hopefully bring the widest popular participation." Gindin, S. (2019, March 6). *We Need to Say What Socialism Will Look Like*. Jacobin. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/03/sam-gindin-socialist-planning-models

[35] Drutman, L. (2021, June 16). *Why the two-party system is wrecking American democracy*. FiveThirtyEight. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-the-two-party-system-is-wrecking-american-democracy/

conflict and foster consensus is through political institutions that are at once inclusive [PR] and authoritative [centralist]."

Why might PR promote consensus building? In their book *Public Governance as Co-creation*, Ansell and Torfing (2021, pp. 233–4) highlight the tension between inclusive diversity, on the one hand, and the goal of consensus building, on the other. One of the strategies for addressing this dilemma, they suggest, is mutual dependency among diverse stakeholder who need to agree on a common solution. This is similar to the idea of a coalition government among different party leaders who must advance a single policy agenda, as is common under multiparty PR systems. If PR does help to promote legislative consensus building, as some studies have found, it may also be more conducive to anarchist progress after the revolution. (Recall that consensus is one of the elements of gradualist anarchism emphasized in Chap. 2).

A More Fluid, Post-modern Party System

Given its permissiveness toward small parties, PR also seems conducive to the "new political ecology" characterized by evanescent political parties (Tormey, 2015, p. 94). This new evanescent, or post-modern, form of party politics is also highlighted by Magone (2019, p. 92), who observes that, in Europe, "Political parties can no longer count on the automatic support of political subcultures but have to compete with other parties for each vote in a very volatile electoral market." As a more permissive electoral system than SMDP or other majoritarian electoral systems, PR makes it easier for individuals or small groups to exit parties and/or start their own (Laver & Schofield, 1990, p. 26).[36] Parties under a PR system should thus reflect more genuine or organic intra-party consensus, even approximating unitary actor status given their high levels of intra-party cohesion. By contrast, one-party or two-party systems will tend to exaggerate the true level of consensus achieved in a society unless those major parties expand organically within the context of a permissive PR electoral system.[37]

Proportional Representation as a Shared Revolutionary Goal

Another benefit of PR concerns its usefulness as a shared revolutionary goal. That is, the adoption of a more proportional electoral system is an inherently non-partisan goal conducive to building a broad-based revolutionary coalition (discussed in

[36] *Electoral system permissiveness* concerns the ease with which minor parties can acquire seats in the legislature. Thus, PR electoral systems can be described as more permissive than majoritarian systems, as a smaller percentage of the popular vote is required to acquire legislative seats.

[37] Political scientists often assume that, if one party wins many consecutive elections, the elections are probably not free and fair. However, it is also possible that, in a democracy with a permissive electoral system, a society has achieved and sustained a high level of consensus behind the program of a single party, indicating that political division has been largely overcome in that polity.

Chap. 8). Progressives, libertarians, and independents of various stripes, as well as disaffected Democrats and Republicans, should all favor having a wider variety of party choices on the ballot with a real chance of winning legislative seats. Crucially, the objective of establishing PR could provide a common goal for the revolutionary movement, something many suggested Occupy Wall Street[38] and the January 6th Capitol Hill rioters were lacking.[39] According to Lawson (2019, p. 233), "without a clear answer to the questions 'emancipation from what,' 'emancipation by whom,' and 'emancipation to where,' [revolutionary social movements] are likely to have fleeting rather than enduring effects."

Addressing Criticisms of Proportional Representation

Allowing the Elite to Hold on to Power

One potential argument against PR is that, because it is more "permissive" toward minor parties, it can help incumbent elites remain in power after a revolutionary transition (Haggard & Kaufman, 2016; Albertus & Menaldo, 2018). As an early example of this, the governing Catholic Party in Belgium adopted party-list PR in 1899 to "save" the Liberal Party from being overtaken by the emerging Socialist Party in the Chamber of Deputies (Duverger, 1954, p. 247). After the fall of the Soviet Union, "In roundtable discussions in Eastern Europe, for example, communist parties advanced electoral proposals such as proportional representation with low thresholds that would at least allow them to survive if not prevail" (Haggard & Kaufman, 2016, p. 162). In the USA, the Democratic and Republican parties would probably remain the largest parties if PR were to be adopted, although they would certainly lose some seats to the Greens, Libertarians, perhaps a centrist party, and some other minor parties (depending on how permissive the system was). However, allowing members of the two major parties to remain present in Congress might also be viewed as a good thing, in that PR might dampen down counter-revolutionary tendencies among the incumbent elites.

[38] According to Micah White (2016, p. 16), "Our purpose in launching Occupy was the creation of a mass protest that could reverse the recent U.S. Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling (2010) that granted corporations and labour unions the right to spend unlimited amounts of money influencing elections." However, Occupy Wall Street "quickly devolved into so many generalized critiques that it ultimately appeared to be without concrete demands" (p. 111). Thus, White refers to "The refusal, and inability, to reach consensus on 'our one demand'" (p. 38).

[39] Giglio, M. (2021, Jan. 10). *A Mob Attacked the Capital for Trump. Now What?* The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2021/01/10/capitol-riot-far-right/

Empowering Extremist Groups?

One of the main criticisms of PR is that, given its permissiveness toward minor parties, extreme parties can gain access to the legislature, thus giving them a platform to spread their views and potentially rise to power (Hermens, 1972 [1941]). For example, the Nazi Party arose in Germany after World War I in the context of the Weimar Republic, which used a very permissive PR system. However, marginalization and exclusion of minor parties (as in a majoritarian electoral system) may not be an effective solution to extremism. As Drutman (2020, p. 230) argues, "In a two-party system, alienation and frustration lack a release valve. Instead, they pressurize into sharper anti-system sentiments and sometimes even violence. By contrast, getting some representation [in a PR system] can make dissenters feel like they are at least being heard."

Still, if there is great concern about the rise of extremist parties, there are two ways PR systems can be made less permissive. First, the "effective representation threshold" – that is, the minimum percentage of the popular vote share needed for a party to acquire its legislative seats (e.g., five percent in Germany) – can be adjusted in accordance with the perceived need to exclude small extremist parties. Second, the "district magnitude," that is, the number of seats in each electoral district, can be lowered to make it harder for minor parties to win seats in any one district.[40]

While there is something to be said for making the electoral system somewhat less permissive (e.g., to prevent authoritarian parties from acquiring legislative seats), having a more permissive system has the benefit of promoting more inclusive and vigorous legislative debates, and, as Douglas Amy (1993, p. 94) observes, "Unsound ideas […] are more likely to wilt when exposed to the heat and light of an intense public debate." Amy (1993, p. 166) also makes the following plausible point: "The political confrontations created by increased representation under PR may be disturbing in the short term, but they are a necessary stage in the process of creating a long-term consensus among conflicting political groups."

Who to Hold Accountable in a Multiparty System?

Another argument against PR is that, because the process of coalition government formation typically takes place *after* the general election, it fosters uncertainty about which party leaders will end up in that coalition (Best, 1995, p. 53; Disch, 2002, p. 133). A related criticism is that, because PR tends to give rise to multiparty legislatures and coalition governments, it is harder to discern which party in government is responsible for public policy and, therefore, which party should be held

[40] District magnitudes in PR systems can range from two-seat (e.g., Chile's Chamber of Deputies) or five-seat districts (e.g., the National Assembly of Wales) up to a very permissive single nationwide multimember district for the entire parliament (e.g., the Israeli Knesset).

accountable at the general election.[41] Moreover, while the parliamentary term is in full swing, minor governing coalition parties can withhold their consent as leverage to obtain some concessions (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 205).

However, PR systems can be designed to address such concerns. For instance, Carey and Hix (2011) argue that PR systems with low to medium district magnitude (say, five seat districts) strike the right balance between fairness of representation (PR's advantage) and the ability to hold representatives accountable (SMDP's advantage). Also, some have argued that the combination of SMDP and PR districts in mixed-member proportional (MMP) systems provides "the best of both worlds" (see Shugart & Wattenberg, 2001, for a discussion). Similarly, for Drutman (2020), moderately permissive multiparty systems (with four to six parties) provide clear enough choices between parties for electoral accountability to function but not so many parties that government becomes dysfunctional.

Lack of Local Representation

Finally, there is the concern that PR systems, with their large, in some cases nationwide multimember districts, will undermine local representation. One possible response to this concern is to make the PR districts coterminous with the subnational units and then, following the European Parliament system, allow each state to develop its own version of PR (either of the party list or STV variety). This would also bear a resemblance to the current US congressional election system, which was initially left up to the states to design and implement (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 129).

Latent Support for Proportional Representation

Recent US public opinion polls suggest record high levels of support for additional choices beyond the two major parties and thus potentially widespread support for PR.[42] For instance, an NBC News poll conducted from October to November of 2017 found that a whopping 71% of millennials feel that a third major party is needed.[43] A Gallup poll conducted about the same time found that "[m]ore Americans than ever – 61 percent – say the Democratic and Republican parties are inadequate and the US should have a third major political party."[44] Another NPR/PBS poll

[41] Thomas Quinn (2015) argues that it is not much easier to "vote the rascals out" under SMDP, challenging one of the main arguments for two-party systems.

[42] Drutman, L. (2018, September 17). *How much longer can the two-party system hold?* Vox. https://www.vox.com/polyarchy/2018/9/17/17870478/two-party-system-electoral-reform

[43] Hartig, H., & Perry, S. (2017, November 29). *Millennial poll: Strong majority want a third politicalparty*.NBCNews.https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/millennial-poll-strong-majority-want-third-political-party-n824526

[44] Haltiwanger, J. (2017, September 27). *Most Americans Desperate for Third Major Political Party in Trump Era*. Newsweek. https://www.newsweek.com/most-americans-desperate-third-major-political-party-trump-era-672540

taken in January 2018 found that just 8% of Americans have a great deal of trust in Congress, 29% in the Republican Party, and 36 in the Democratic Party.[45]

The systematic exclusion of alternatives to the Democratic and Republican parties is, in a sense, undemocratic "since the majority US opinion has long and consistently supported the existence of a third political party" (Street, 2014, p. 146). The exclusion of minor parties can be attributed to the majoritarian electoral systems used in the USA as well as additional efforts by the major party leaders to keep minor parties off the ballot.[46] As Wetzel (2022, p. 230) observes, "Since the era of the American Socialist Party's electoral campaigns in the early 1900s, Democratic and Republican legislators have passed various laws that make it difficult to elect politicians outside the two-party shared monopoly." Although "it is clearly too soon to draw any conclusions about the final partisan implications of a move toward PR in the United States" (Amy, 1993, p. 32), PR does provide a potential shared goal for revolutionary change that could generate broad-based support.

Proportional Representation Versus Ranked Choice Voting

Support for Ranked Choice Voting in the USA

Perhaps the most popular electoral system reform idea in the USA today is Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) – particularly the majoritarian Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) system, especially among younger Americans (McCarthy & Santucci, 2021).[47] For instance, voters in the State of Maine recently approved IRV for its statewide elections.[48] Supporters of IRV also won a case in the Maine Supreme Court in October 2020, paving the way for the state to be the first to use ranked choice in the US presidential election.[49] IRV is also currently used to elect the mayors of Oakland and San Francisco, California (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 142). As of March 2021, lawmakers in

[45] Lange, J. (2018, January 17). *Americans have enormous faith in the military, very little in public schools*. The Week. http://theweek.com/speedreads/749184/americans-have-enormous-faith-military-little-public-schools

[46] Mercer, M. (2019, July 1). *Progress Stalls for Minor Parties to Get on State Ballots*. The Pew Charitable Trusts. https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2019/07/01/progress-stalls-for-minor-parties-to-get-on-state-ballots

[47] There are three types of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) electoral systems. Instant Runoff Voting (IRV), also called the Alternative Vote, is a single-member district majority system and is the most common form of RCV in the USA. The other two types of RCV are used in multimember districts: block-preferential voting and Single-Transferable Vote (STV) (McCarthy & Santucci, 2021). See also: Center for Election Science. (2019, July 29). *Three Alternative Voting Methods: Pros and Cons*. https://www.givingcompass.org/article/alternative-voting-methods-pros-cons/

[48] Hoffman, B. (2018, June 15). *Maine Passes "People's Veto" to Overturn Legislature and Preserve Popular New Voting System*. American Civil Liberties Union. https://www.aclu.org/blog/voting-rights/maine-passes-peoples-veto-overturn-legislature-and-preserve-popular-new-voting

[49] WGME. (2020, October 1). *Maine Supreme Court denies ranked-choice voting appeal*. https://wgme.com/news/local/maine-supreme-court-denies-ranked-choice-voting-appeal

29 states were considering measures to adopt IRV in local, statewide, or presidential primary elections, often with bipartisan support.[50]

In his book *Breaking the Two-Party Doom Loop*, Drutman (2020, pp. 189–91) makes a persuasive argument in favor of a proportional single-transferable vote (STV) system ("multi-member district ranked choice voting") over mixed-member proportional (MMP), a close runner-up. Drutman suggests that "the party-list component of MMP could be a tough sell in [the American] political culture with a dour view of political parties" (p. 190). Drutman refers to the Fair Representation Act (which would implement a STV electoral system), introduced by Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA), Ro Khanna (D-CA), and Jamie Raskin (D-MD) in 2017, as a start.[51] However, the bill appears to have died in committee in June 2021,[52] consistent with the argument that revolutionary strategy is needed to achieve radical reform (STV, MMP, et cetera) at the national level (see Chap. 8).

Advantages of Party-List PR Over Ranked Choice Voting

Party-list PR has three actual and/or potential advantages over ranked choice voting (RCV) systems. The first advantage regards proportionality, specifically compared to instant runoff voting (IRV). Although IRV "is a majoritarian method" given its use of single-seat districts (Lijphart, 2008, p. 17), favoring large parties over smaller ones (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 179), it does yield more proportional legislative seat distributions than SMDP. However, PR systems score slightly higher on proportionality scales than IRV (Bale, 2017, p. 194), and thus offer a "fairer" system of representation. For example, in Alaska's 2022 gubernatorial election, the Democratic candidate (Mary Peltola) defeated the Republican candidate (Sarah Palin) in the second round, even though the Republican candidate eliminated in the first round (Nick Begich) would have defeated Peltola in a one-on-one match.[53] Furthermore, PR is arguably simpler and more intuitive for the common person to understand. To wit, each party receives a share of seats proportional to its share of the popular vote.[54]

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[50] Vasilogambros, M. (2021, March 12). *Ranked-Choice Voting Gains Momentum Nationwide*. The Pew Charitable Trusts. https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/03/12/ranked-choice-voting-gains-momentum-nationwide

[51] Jilani, Z., & Gray, B. (2018, August 10). *Democrats Complain about Green Party "Spoilers", but Few in Congress Back a Solution: Ranked-Choice Voting*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2018/08/10/ohio-special-election-ranked-choice-voting/

[52] Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Fair Representation Act (United States)*. Retrieved January 12, 2023, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_Representation_Act_(United_States)#Legislative_history

[53] Hamlin, A. (2022, September 16). *RCV Fools Palin Voters into Electing a Progressive Democrat*. Election Science. https://electionscience.org/commentary-analysis/rcv-fools-palin-voters-into-electing-a-progressive-democrat/

[54] PR systems do get somewhat more complicated upon closer examination of the electoral formulas used to translate votes into seats. At the most basic level, one can distinguish between quota and divisor-based PR electoral formulas (Clark et al., 2013, p. 567). However, voters don't necessarily

A second plausible advantage of closed-list PR over RCV, including both the majoritarian IRV and proportional single-transferable vote (STV) systems, concerns the representatives' incentives created by the two systems. Because rank-choice systems ask voters to choose personal candidates rather than a party list, such systems may provide candidates with an incentive to serve local particularistic interests (to build their own reputation among voters) rather than collective public interests corresponding to the party-centric, geographically large multimember electoral districts in a party-list PR system (Lundberg, 2014, p. 364). For example, according to Magone (2019, p. 306), the use of STV in Ireland or Malta has fostered a culture of gerrymandering, and "[t]he dangers of clientelism and patronage are always a present reality."

A third potential advantage of party-list PR over RCV is PR's greater potential to usher in a multiparty system. McCarthy and Santucci (2021) find that support for RCV (as an alternative to the status quo SMDP systems) is strongest among younger Americans, who are less satisfied with the current two-party system. However, they question whether RCV (majoritarian IRV in particular) can bring about transformative change:

> So far, with the exception of two consent decrees [in Eastpointe (MI) and Palm Desert (CA)], all recent RCV adoptions in the United States have been winner-take-all implementations, not multi-seat proportional systems. This limits the influence of insurgent candidates, be they from minor parties or factions of the major parties. […] Time will tell whether these new RCV systems live up to their 'disruptive potential' (p. 50).

One way to assess the potential for closed-list PR and IRV to bring about transformative change is by comparing their impacts on the number of political parties elected. While a systematic analysis of that topic is beyond the scope of this chapter, the fact that closed-list PR scores higher on proportionality indices than IRV suggests that PR should fare better when it comes to the promotion of alternative parties. Anecdotally, for instance, although the State of Maine used IRV to elect its House of Representatives in 2020, the vast majority of those elected were Democrats and Republicans, with only a few exceptions.

Some comparative scholars have argued for "preferential" (i.e., choosing candidates by name) RCV systems on the grounds that, while PR systems may replicate bitter societal divisions in the legislature, preferential systems encourage candidates to make broad, centrist appeals in the hopes that they can acquire the second or third preference votes of a diverse group of voters (Clark et al., 2013, p. 565). However, one could counter-argue that party-list PR promotes coalition building among ideologically distinct parties in the legislature rather than convergence on the political center during the election campaigns (which may or may not be morally desirable, depending on the issue dimension under consideration).

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need to understand those formulas to cast an informed vote for their preferred party on the ballot. On the other hand, one could also argue that IRV ballots are fairly simple to use.

Party-List PR Versus Selection by Lot: Any Role for Political Parties?

Some Argue for Sortition Rather than Elections

Some have also argued that the delegation of policy-making authority by lottery (i.e., random selection or "sortition") is preferable to democratic elections in general (Guerrero, 2014; Shah, 2021). Asimakopoulos (2013), for example, argues that a lottocratic method should be applied to both political institutions and the boards of private corporations on the grounds that such a system would be less prone to elite capture than electoral and party systems.

Advocates of sortition tend to focus their critique of electoral systems more on majoritarian than proportional systems of representation. For example, according to Alpa Shah (2021, p. 16), single-member district council elections in the east Indian state of Jharkhand have promoted "a new kind of patriarchy" and corruption, in contrast to the egalitarian values found in the villages using sortition. While I would agree that sortition is generally preferable to majoritarian electoral systems, I will argue below that party-list PR may have some advantages over sortition as well.

Tradeoffs Associated with Sortition Systems

Landa and Pevnick (2021) emphasize that, even in sortition systems, representatives may be vulnerable to influence from special interest groups. The risk of "special interest capture" (i.e., interest group control over policy outcomes) might even be worse in a lottocratic system, as the public would lack means of holding policymakers accountable. One solution might be shorter terms of office, but then those selected by lot would be more reliant on bureaucrats for policy expertise, increasing the risk of "bureaucratic capture" (where bureaucrats shape policy outcomes).

A second tradeoff within sortition systems concerns the level of empowerment. On the one hand, if those randomly selected are given full control over the legislative process, they will be more vulnerable to special interests or bureaucratic capture (depending on term lengths). On the other hand, if policymakers are given very limited policy-making powers (to avoid capture), they will lack the power to achieve essential reforms. Landa and Pevnick (2021) argue that, by striking the right balance between these two tradeoffs, randomly selected legislators can still play a complementary advisory role in a democracy by providing elected representatives with information about public preferences obtained through deliberations in sortition-based assemblies.

Advantages of Party Systems

While selection by lot and party-list PR are both proportional systems of representation (in that sortition involves random selection of delegates from the population), a crucial difference between the two is that political parties would play a far less

prominent, if any, role under the lottocratic system. Thus, debate over the merits of party-list PR versus selection by lot might focus on the pros or cons of party systems generally.[55] I will here highlight some advantages of party systems emphasized by political scientists and, in the next part, review some downsides emphasized in anarchist thought.

In national assemblies, political parties provide "ready-made coalitions," which make it easier for legislators to build majorities over numerous pieces of legislation (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 169).[56] A society might also prefer a more "professional" party-based (as opposed to a "citizen" sortition-based) legislature to deal with more complex legislation. Buchanan and Tullock (1990 [1962], p. 218) note that, under selection by lot, "the costs of reaching collective decisions would probably be quite high." Indeed, legislative complexity will still be around, even in a more anarchistic society. As Hasnas (2008, p. 119) observes, "The idea that there is a concise set of simple, clear rules that can preserve a peaceful, free society is a fantasy." Thus, a party-list PR system might be advantageous at more central levels of government with larger legislatures and more political business to attend to.[57]

At the mass level, political parties clarify alternatives, make politics accessible to the general public, and channel and organize political ambition (Drutman, 2020, p. 6). Political party labels provide cues and thus make it easier for voters who don't have time to conduct research on the candidates to still cast an informed vote based solely on those candidates' party affiliations (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 169). Political parties can also potentially serve as gatekeepers that prevent populist demagogues from rising to power (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018), although there would be less need for such precautions after a successful social revolution.

Anarchist Arguments Against Parties, and a Response

Anarchists have traditionally been opposed to political party systems.[58] As Woodcock (1962, p. 18) explains, "[T]he basic ideas of anarchism, with their stress on freedom and spontaneity, preclude the possibility of rigid organization, and particularly of anything in the nature of a party constructed for the purpose of seizing

[55] A more permissive PR system (i.e., one that allows even very small parties to acquire legislative seats, say, with a 1% representation threshold) would probably allow for more evanescent parties and fluid coalitions than a less permissive PR system (with, say, a 5% threshold). Still, even a highly permissive PR system would presumably be more party-based than a lottocratic system.

[56] In this sense, party systems might also help to address the critique (noted previously) that it would be difficult for a democratic transitionary society to act swiftly, and collectively, to make the many political decisions implied by the vision of anarchism described in this book.

[57] For example, in the east Indian state of Jharkhand, democracy by sortition is often used in villages such as Munda but not at the inter-village level (Shah, 2021, p. 12).

[58] Anarchists tend to be skeptical about the potential benefits of democratic institutional choices such as electoral and party systems. For example, in *The Conquest of Bread*, Kropotkin (2015 [1892], p. 154) writes, "democracies of all countries vainly imagine various palliatives. The referendum is tried and found to be a failure; proportional representation is spoken of, the representa-

and holding power." Also, according to Russian anarchist Voline, "The idea of anarchism is simple: no party, or political or ideological group, even if it sincerely desires to do so, will ever succeed in emancipating the working masses by placing itself above or outside them in order to 'govern' or 'guide' them" (quoted in Taibo, 2019, p. 25).

On the other hand, Noam Chomsky (2009 [1976], p. 138) has commented that, "As for political parties, my feeling is that an anarchist society would not forcefully prevent political parties from arising." Of course, political parties are indicative of, and can potentially contribute to, political division in society.[59] However, consensus is a long-term goal to be achieved, not something that can simply be recognized as socially valuable and thereby magically brought into existence. It is important not only to recognize the value of consensus but also to design political institutions that make the realization of that goal more likely.[60]

7.3 Economic Realm

Evaluating Socioeconomic Class

Egalitarianism and Political Autonomy

The main socioeconomic objective focused on in this part of this chapter is achieving and sustaining an egalitarian (or post-class) society. Even in a liberal democracy, the existence of a ruling class suggests that the masses lack autonomy when it comes to collective decision-making. Making a similar point, American playwright C. J. Hopkins observes that "The global capitalist ruling classes are never going to allow us to govern ourselves, not in any meaningful way."[61] If so, and if equal liberty is accepted as a social objective, the need for social revolution will depend in part on (i) whether a ruling class exists and, if so, (ii) whether the power of that ruling

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tion of minorities, and other parliamentary utopias. […A]fter each new experiment they are bound to recognize that it was a failure."

[59] Reflecting this concern, in the autonomous zone of Cherán, Mexico, elections and political parties are viewed as violent and divisive, and political party propaganda is strictly prohibited (Campbell, 2020, pp. 184–5). However, the region of Cherán is also much more homogenous and anarchistic than most countries as a whole, and thus better prepared to abolish the party system within their locality.

[60] Commenting on the role of political leadership after a successful democratic socialist revolution, Sam Gindin observes plausibly that "Democracy alone doesn't guarantee that socialism won't be stalled or reversed. Its advance will continue to depend on the role of a party or parties – in office or out – who are committed to the most ambitious of socialism's long-term egalitarian, participative, and developmental goals." Gindin, S. (2019, March 6). *We Need to Say What Socialism Will Look Like*. Jacobin. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/03/sam-gindin-socialist-planning-models

[61] Hopkins, C. J. (2018, May 23). *The Simulation of Democracy*. Counter Punch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/05/23/the-simulation-of-democracy/

class can be broken up with a reformist rather than revolutionary strategy. With regard to the latter question, it will be argued in Chap. 8 that a revolutionary movement will be needed to achieve an egalitarian distribution of wealth in the USA.

To organize the following discussion, I will distinguish between two interrelated questions: *Does a ruling class exist?* And *who is in the ruling class?* My response to the first question – Does a ruling class exist? – will be organized around the criteria used in Sigman and Lindberg's (2019) article "Democracy for All: Conceptualizing and Measuring Egalitarian Democracy." Sigman and Lindberg measure egalitarianism along three dimensions: (i) equal distribution of resources; (ii) equal protection of rights and freedoms; and (iii) equal access to political power. To address the latter question, Who is in the ruling class? – I will draw upon other perspectives such as Marxism and libertarian socialism.

Does a Ruling Class Exist?

Equal Distribution of Resources

In assessing whether a ruling class exists, expanding on Sigman and Lindberg's first socioeconomic indicator (the equal distribution of resources), we can emphasize the importance of socioeconomic inequality as an indicator. Is there some level of inequality that marks a tipping point between class stratification and egalitarianism? Or, as Graeber and Wengrow (2021, p. 7) ask in *The Dawn of Everything*, "Exactly how equal would people have to be in order for us to be able to say we've 'eliminated inequality'?" For instance, if we were to designate as "unequal" any country with a Gini Index score above the median score of all countries (say, in the year 2000), that would include the USA but not the UK. We might also refer to measures of wealth concentration. For instance, according to Winters and Page (2009, p. 736), in 2004, the top 1% of American wealth holders (together) possessed about 42% of all non-home wealth in the USA, while the bottom 40% of Americans were $8700 in debt on average.

Wetzel (2022, p. 15) argues that class is not defined by income or education, but rather by the distribution of institutional power. In a similar vein, Piketty (2020, p. 659) argues that "the Gini coefficient masks flesh-and-blood social conflict between different groups in the income or wealth hierarchy." Measures of income and wealth inequality might be viewed as a proxy measure for political power, given the close link between economic and political inequality. As Disslbacher and Mokre note, "Researchers in the social sciences are certain that political influence grows with wealth."[62] Still, in assessing whether egalitarianism has been achieved, it is

[62] Disslbacher, F., & Mokre, P. (2020, June 15). *What the latest Household Finance and Consumption Survey tells us about wealth inequality in Europe*. London School of Economics. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2020/06/15/what-the-latest-household-finance-and-consumption-survey-tells-us-about-wealth-inequality-in-europe/

also useful to consider additional factors concerning equal protection under the law and the distribution of political power.

Equal Protection

Sigman and Lindberg also use equal protection of rights and freedoms as an indicator of egalitarianism. This should presumably apply to both the written law and actual practice. For instance, the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution (1868) mandates that individuals in similar situations be treated equally by the law. However, the USA still falls short of that ideal in practice. For instance, even today, white supremacist vigilantes sometimes get away with acts of violence against civil rights activists. For example, Kyle Rittenhouse was cleared of all charges after killing two Black Lives Matter protestors in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in the Summer of 2020.[63] Also, numerous studies have found that race is a significant factor in US death penalty cases.[64]

Using the equal protection criterion, we might also evaluate the ability of the people to hold the police accountable. As was mentioned in Chap. 6, police in the USA are often not held accountable for excessive uses of force. Moreover, by that standard, the existence of secret police would provide a strong indicator of a ruling class presence. For instance, Paul Goodman once wrote that, "There is a System and a Power Elite [in the US.] A major part of it – the military-industrial and the CIA, and FBI – even constitute a 'hidden government' that does not thrive on public exposure" (Stoer, 1994, p. 25). For example, the FBI's Cointelpro operations against civil rights activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. were exposed by an activist group that broke into an FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania, in the early 1970s.[65]

Equal Access to Power

Finally, Sigman and Lindberg view equal access to political power (including the descriptive representation of minority groups) as an indicator of egalitarianism. Within the USA, since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, racial minorities have gained greater access to the vote, although the Republican Party continues to erect barriers to voting, as mentioned in Chaps 5 and 6. Moreover, the high costs of running an electoral campaign are prohibitive for most citizens. I would also add that democracies with a two-party system are more likely to have a ruling class than

[63] Associated Press. (2021, November 19). *Kyle Rittenhouse Cleared of All Charges in Kenosha Shootings*. WDET. https://wdet.org/2021/11/19/kyle-rittenhouse-cleared-of-all-charges-in-kenosha-shootings/

[64] National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. (n.d.). *Racial Bias*. Retrieved January 12, 2022, from https://www.ncadp.org/pages/racial-bias

[65] Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Cointelpro*. Retrieved January 12, 2022, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/cointelpro#Program_revealed

those with a multiparty system, as the former is more conducive to the sophisticated use of electoral concessions as a means of maintaining upper class rule (as described in Chap. 5). Also, in a multiparty PR system, it becomes harder for elites to silence critical voices or exclude "inconvenient truths" from political debate.[66]

In Sum: Need for a Qualitative Assessment

Ultimately, a qualitative assessment of a country, rather than any single measure, may be needed to assess whether a ruling class exists. Guided by Sigman and Lindberg's criteria – equal distribution, equal protection, and equal access – we can point to some strong evidence that the USA is not an egalitarian democracy. The high level of inequality, shortcomings in equal protection, and continued barriers to political power, in addition to the larger political landscape reviewed in the previous chapter, are indicative of a ruling class presence.[67]

Who Is in the Ruling Class?

Owners of the Means of Production

Assessing whether a ruling class exists is one thing. Identifying which members of a society are part of that upper class is another. Generally speaking, social class can be understood as a mixture of cultural, material, and other factors (Piketty, 2020, p. 721; Reagan, 2021). By contrast, Marx and Engels defined the ruling class simply as "Those who are able to gain control of the means of production" (paraphrased by Held, 1987, p. 107). Similarly, Bookchin (2005, p. 68) describes the ruling class as "a privileged social stratum that owns or controls the means of production and exploits a larger mass of people, the ruled class, which works these productive forces." This is a simple yet plausible definition of the ruling class. After all, given

[66] Related to the distribution of political power, Albertus and Menaldo (2018) evaluate whether a country's democratic constitution was initially drafted in a "popular" way (i.e., by the people) or by elites to secure their own privileges. They find that, of all the democratic transitions between 1800 and 2006, 66% inherited a constitution designed by the outgoing elites, while the other 34% became popular (or egalitarian) democracies. Sweden, for instance, is described as an example of egalitarian democracy by Albertus and Menaldo and also scores very high on the egalitarian democracy index constructed by Sigman and Lindberg (2019, Fig. 3).

[67] The three dimensions Sigman and Lindberg use to measure egalitarianism seem conceptually valid and were thus used to organize the foregoing discussion. However, Sigman and Lindberg do not use a direct indicator of inequality to measure the equal distribution of resources. Instead, they examine whether welfare, education, and health care are provided in a targeted (inegalitarian) or universal (egalitarian) way. This might explain why the USA achieves a high .85/1 egalitarianism score in their index, which would seem to lack face validity. Sigman and Lindberg might reply that inequality is an outcome, not a public policy, and should thus not be used as an indicator of egalitarian democracy. However, I am focusing on egalitarianism as a socioeconomic rather than a political-institutional concept.

the importance of private enterprise in a capitalist economy ("the base," in Marxian terminology), it makes sense that the owners of such enterprises would wield disproportionate influence over public policy (Block, 1977).

Domhoff (2006, p. 210) adds some nuance, noting that while the Marxist theoretical school usually views the owners of the means of production as the dominant class, "it also stresses that there can be government autonomy [from those owners] or mixed power structures in times of large-scale societal transitions." That nuanced understanding is more consistent with my view that private enterprise does not necessarily indicate the existence of a ruling class. Indeed, it was argued in Chap. 3 that a libertarian mixed economy (including free markets) is most conducive to egalitarianism. In that case, the public and private economic sectors are roughly equal in importance to the overall economic system, and tipping too far in either direction risks the rise of a new ruling class.

A More Expansive Understanding of the Ruling Class

In Marxist theory, political and cultural factors are part of the superstructure of a society, built upon the economic base (i.e., the mode of production). From that perspective, political elites are not part of the ruling class per se. Thus, Fred Block (1977, p. 10), arguing from a Marxist perspective, distinguished between "the capitalist class" and the "managers of the state apparatus." However, a more expansive understanding of the ruling class might include both economic and political elites. For instance, Shannon, Nocella, and Asimakopoulos (2012, p. 20) describe the ruling class as "those who control investment decisions, determine high level policy, set the agenda for capital and state." Similarly, Wetzel (2022, p. 13) describes the ruling class as composed of the capitalist class (controlling business assets) as well as the bureaucratic control class (with decision-making authority in businesses and government agencies). One might also consider the owners of major media networks and high-ranking military officials as potential members of the ruling class.

A broader understanding of the ruling class might also focus on the wealthiest members of a community. For example, to identify specific members of the upper class, Domhoff (2006) refers to their Registers or "Blue Books," and identifies members of elite schools, Country Clubs, Men's Clubs, and Women's Clubs. The ruling class can be hard to identify, as the rich generally prefer to keep a low profile (Street, 2014, p. 174; Domhoff, 2006). However, identifying key actors within the ruling class should still be possible. For example, Occupy Wall Street led a "Millionaires' March" around the Upper East Side of Manhattan in October 2011 and made "house calls" outside the homes of media mogul Rupert Murdoch, JP Morgan Stanley CEO Jamie Dimon, billionaire industrialist David Koch, real estate developer Howard Milstein, and billionaire hedge fund manager John Paulson (Street, 2014, p. 177).

Achieving Egalitarianism

The Role of the Democratic Transitionary State

Social revolutions are inherently radical events that are conceptually distinct from the state (Eckstrand, 2022). However, during the social revolution, the democratic transitionary state could help facilitate an orderly breakup of the ruling class. There are several means of achieving and sustaining egalitarianism. For instance, Piketty (2020) promotes a mixture of (i) *public ownership* (i.e., nationalization or expropriation); (ii) *social ownership* (co-determination or power sharing within firms); and (iii) *temporary ownership* (circulating private wealth via progressive taxes and a universal basic income). In the following discussion, I will briefly discuss public ownership, progressive taxation, and agrarian (land) reform.

Public Ownership

Public ownership may involve nationalizing or expropriating certain private enterprises. For example, the French government took over Renault automobiles in 1944 (Piketty, 2020, pp. 434–5). This raises two questions: One concerning which property can be justly expropriated, and another concerning just compensation. With regard to the first question, in Chap. 3, I suggested some basic guideposts for adjudicating property rights disputes in particular cases. Specifically, those included the baseline property rules (especially whether property was justly acquired), as well as whether that property deprives people of their positive rights to essential goods and services.

During a social revolution, the processes of redistributing wealth and recalibrating the proper balance between the public and private economic spheres of the mixed economy may appear to lean unfairly toward democratization (and away from private property rights). However, such outcomes may in fact reflect a necessary corrective to the excessive wealth accumulation and privatization that have taken place during (and, to some extent, prior to) the neoliberal era.

This brings us to the second question regarding just compensation. During the French Revolution, Church property from the feudal era was confiscated and auctioned off by the revolutionary government.[68] At that time, French legislators used a conservative standard to determine whether a property owner should be compensated: "any property right (or similar relationship) that had existed for a long enough time was regarded as prima facie legitimate" (Piketty, 2020, p. 104). By contrast, in some provinces of southern France, ownership required written evidence of title to receive compensation (ibid).

[68] Petersen, G. M. (2017, July 28). *The French Revolution, Property Rights, and the Coase Theorem with Noel Johnson*. The Economics Detective. https://economicsdetective.com/2017/07/french-revolution-property-rights-coase-theorem-noel-johnson/

Spafford (2020, p. 337) implies a more abstract potential guideline for determining whether an actor should be compensated for expropriation: "each person should limit her holdings to just the resources assigned to her by the relevant egalitarian principle of distributive justice (e.g., the resources that will allow her to live as good of a life as everyone else)." How such a guideline might be applied in particular cases would need to be worked out in particular polities, perhaps drawing upon relevant judicial precedent. To render the process of expropriation and compensation as just as possible, the judicial system might help ensure due process by adjudicating in particular cases and helping settle such cases by determining when expropriation and compensation are justified and in what amounts.

Progressive Taxation

Progressive taxes come in three basic forms: progressive income, inheritance, and wealth (property) taxes. According to Piketty (2020, p. 559), "Each has its justifications and can be seen as complementary to the other two." While each polity would need to determine their own tax rates, Piketty suggestively refers back to the mid-twentieth century, when progressive taxes on inheritances and income ran as high as 70–90% in the USA and the UK (pp. 142–3). Piketty also describes the progressive wealth tax as "the central tool for achieving true circulation of capital" (p. 976). In Piketty's vision, those tax revenues would, in turn, fund a universal basic income, a universal capital endowment for young adults, and an ambitious social state (p. 1004). Inglehart (2018, p. 211) has argued that "moving toward a more progressive income tax would be perfectly reasonable," and that a higher inheritance tax "is a relatively painless way to raise funding that is badly needed for investment in education, medical care, research and development, and infrastructure."

Agrarian (Land) Reform

Another potential means of achieving egalitarianism is agrarian (or land) reform. According to Piketty (2020, p. 980), agrarian reform is "intended to break up large farms of hundreds or thousands of acres to allow more modest farmers to work their own land and reap the fruits thereof instead of paying rent to landlords." Piketty adds that the concentration of other assets (equipment, tools, warehouses, offices, buildings, cash, and various financial assets) also contributes to the problem of concentrated wealth (p. 980). Other possible coercive measures include anti-trust efforts (intended to break up monopolistic companies in big tech, airline, internet service, banking, and other critical sectors), as well as regulations such as raising the minimum wage.

Maintaining Egalitarianism

Applying Libertarian Principles After the Revolution

A key difference between Piketty's (2020) democratic socialism[69] and libertarian social democracy (this book's argument) is that, while the former views statist wealth redistribution as a "permanent process" needed to maintain egalitarianism (pp. 980–1), the latter offers a vision beyond the coercive state. That is, from the perspective of libertarian social democracy, while the state will likely be needed to achieve and stabilize egalitarianism, a post-class society can potentially be sustained without the state via informal or non-state means. Thus, libertarian social democracy aims to phase out taxes, regulations, and other coercive measures when this is equal liberty maximizing.

At a very general level, libertarian social democracy's three informal mechanisms for maintaining egalitarianism in the longer term correspond to the three realms of social life: maintaining a properly balanced mixed economy, designing political institutions that render political processes less susceptible to private interest influence, and promoting an anarchistic culture conducive to equal liberty maximization. Just as a revolutionary movement should aim to prefigure respect for individual rights, so too should it rely as much as possible on non-coercive means of achieving and sustaining egalitarianism.

Balancing Freedom and Equality

Maintaining an equal liberty maximizing balance between freedom and equality after the social revolution may be challenging. Indicative of tilting too far toward equality, some have viewed the Communist Party (in countries where it has taken over) as a type of ruling class. For instance, according to Inglehart (2018, p. 159), by the time of the Brezhnev era (1964–1982) in Russia, "It became evident that the revolutionary vision of an egalitarian classless society had given way to a society ruled by a privileged and self-perpetuating New Class, dominated by the Communist Party." That insight cautions us against moving too far toward equality at the expense of freedom. Conversely, liberal democracies are at risk of tilting too far toward freedom at the expense of equality.

Of course, some income inequality would continue to exist in an egalitarian society. That is, even with a properly balanced mixed economy, those who wish to pursue a private enterprise would be able to accumulate some wealth, while those who prefer to live entirely within the public sphere could do so comfortably but wouldn't earn (fungible) money from their labor (which would be voluntary, at least at the

[69] Discussing participatory socialism, Piketty (2020, p. 969) writes, "The proposals I examine here derive from the democratic socialist tradition, notably the emphasis I place on transcending private ownership and involving workers and their representatives in corporate governance (a practice that has already played an important role in German and Nordic social democracy)."

communist stage after the state has withered away).[70] A just (i.e., equal liberty maximizing) level of inequality would, on the one hand, provide incentives to innovate as well as plenty of space for individualistic freedoms. On the other hand, a just inequality would not be so great that wealthy individuals could gain disproportionate influence over politics and public policy. The greater the disparity in wealth, the greater the danger of tipping the balance too far toward freedom and away from equality, potentially transitioning from the virtuous back into the vicious cycle mentioned in the conclusion of Chap. 3.[71]

In Chap. 3, it was argued that a libertarian mixed economy, in the context of an egalitarian democratic transitionary state and/or society, would be equal liberty maximizing. From that perspective, after a successful social revolution, the existence of private enterprise does not necessarily indicate the existence of a ruling class. Rather, after a successful social revolution, capital accumulation (and the political influence likely to accumulate along with it) can be limited by a properly balanced mixed economy in a context of cultural norms and political institutions conducive to anarchist progress.[72]

Guiding Principles for Sustaining Egalitarianism

In evaluating the institutional tradeoff between total utility gained and the level of inequality, one can distinguish between "worst off priority" and "equality priority" criteria (Barrett, 2020). From the "worst off priority" perspective, institutional reforms are just if the economic welfare of the entire society is improved, even if this results in an overall increase in inequality (sometimes called Pareto efficiency). Addressing a similar topic, Rawls's difference principle holds that inequalities must benefit all and "are unjust unless they benefit the worst off as much as possible" (paraphrased by Barrett, 2020, p. 197).

From the "equality priority" perspective, institutional reforms are just if they reduce overall socioeconomic inequality, so long as not everyone is made worse off

[70] As explained by Wetzel (2022, p. 357), a non-state participatory socialist economic system could incentivize worker contributions through vouchers or "entitlements to consume." However, to my knowledge, this could not include (fully fungible) monetary paychecks, which would require statist coercive taxation to fund.

[71] As was explained in Chap. 3, an equal liberty maximizing mixed economy would include a blend of public and private economic spheres. While the private sphere would include free markets, it would not be accurate to describe that part of the economy as capitalism, which, according to Graeber and Wengrow (2021, p. 178), involves "constant reinvestment, turning one's wealth into an engine for creating ever more wealth." As was also argued in Chap. 3, the existence of quality job opportunities in a democratically managed public economic sphere would provide the primary brake on the accumulation of capital under libertarian socialist democracy.

[72] As was emphasized in Chap. 1, this argument can be distinguished from Marxist and class struggle anarchist perspectives, which tend to argue that economic systems allowing for free enterprise will eventually give way to capitalist accumulation of wealth and political power and a "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie."

(similar to Kaldor-Hicks efficiency). In that case, all do not necessarily gain in personal wealth (e.g., the rich may lose wealth), but the overall level of socioeconomic inequality is reduced. This book's argument aligns more with the latter equality priority view, given the apparently strong link between economic and political inequality. From that perspective, simply making everyone in a society economically better off is not necessarily most conducive to equal liberty if an increase in economic inequality leads to heightened *political* inequality.

Addressing Concerns About Wealth Redistribution

Prefiguring Respect for Property Rights

Opponents of wealth redistribution sometimes make a Pandora's Box argument that any serious attempt at redistribution will culminate in something like Soviet Union communism. However, as Piketty (2020, p. 679) emphasizes, the economic and social successes of capitalist countries in the mid-twentieth century were in large part attributable to inequality-reducing measures such as the progressive income tax. Still, there may be legitimate concerns about wealth redistribution, for instance, with regard to property rights and monetary inflation.

During a social revolution, ignoring private property rights may make it easier to achieve egalitarianism in the short run. After all, constitutionally protected private property rights make it more challenging to expropriate property from the rich (e.g., through eminent domain) and to redistribute wealth through regulations, taxes, and public spending (Albertus & Menaldo, 2018, pp. 94–5).[73] On the other hand, prefiguring respect for individual rights (including rights to private property) during a revolution will contribute to that revolution's long-term success. Prefiguring respect for just law during the revolutionary transition will help to bring about a more sensible outcome with regard to the redistribution of wealth, minimize violence during the transition, and increase respect for the post-revolution system of just law.

Avoiding Inflation During the Revolution

The set of radical reforms undertaken by Salvador Allende in Chile to achieve egalitarianism after winning the 1970 presidential election, demonstrate the difficulty of transitioning to an egalitarian society, but can also yield valuable lessons. First, the fact that Allende won with a mere 36% of the popular vote (followed by 35% and 28% for the runners-up) before being ousted in the coup suggests that building a

[73] Power sharing-style "willing buyer/willing seller" arrangements are less coercive than eminent domain approaches and may have greater potential to promote credible commitments and positive-sum outcomes, as suggested by the governance of New York City's watersheds (Schlager et al., 2020).

broader coalition is needed for revolutionary success (see also Chap. 8). As Przeworski (2019, p. 64) observes, "Clearly, Allende did not have a popular mandate for far-reaching social and economic transformations." That point aside, Albertus and Menaldo (2018, pp. 222–3) provide the following overview of the Chilean example, which is worth quoting in its entirety:

> [A]fter running on an explicitly socialist platform and a pledge to 'eliminate the hacienda,' Allende immediately nationalized the copper industry through a constitutional amendment, expropriating the Anaconda and Kennecott mines without compensating their North American owners. He also dramatically deepened the country's land reform, expropriating more than five million hectares of land by vigorously applying Frei's land reform law and enforcing land-holding ceilings. Between Frei and Allende, 43 percent of Chile's agricultural land was expropriated or purchased from private landowners. Allende also nationalized the country's banks, as well as more than 150 firms, including more than 50 percent of Chile's largest companies. The serial violation of property rights represented by these nationalizations was then complemented by subtler ones. Wage laborers and peasants took over several privately owned factories and farms, triggering social unrest. Indeed, Allende leveraged the farm occupations to apply Article 171 of the 1967 labor law, which allowed the government to acquire private lands in the event of labor disputes. On the macroeconomic front, Allende unleashed the printing presses like no Chilean president before him. He did this to boost wages and salaries. Price controls were also instituted.

Albertus and Menaldo add that such radical reforms led to a very high average inflation rate of 152% and had disastrous results for the economy:

> Although in the short run [Allende's] policies boosted demand and therefore economic growth, eventually they triggered an economic implosion. Real wages fell precipitously due to inflation, and economic growth collapsed. [All this] galvanized domestic support for a coup by Chile's upper and middle classes, the military, and the Nixon administration. With the help of the CIA, Allende was overthrown by the military on September 11, 1973.

What lessons can be gleaned from Chile's example? The first two lessons concern property rights. First, there should be a general effort to minimize private property rights violations, allowing for due process in disputed cases to the extent possible. Second, openness to providing compensation for expropriations could make the transition more consensual.[74] With regard to avoiding inflation, if, during a social revolution within the USA, the US dollar value continued to float (as it does now), avoiding inflation would ultimately rely on maintaining investor faith in the US economy. The balanced vision described in Part I (including the idea of a libertarian mixed economy), plus a transitionary process that prefigures respect for just law, could help to maintain such faith and perhaps even strengthen the dollar if the revolution is well executed. However, if concerns about monetary volatility remain, it

[74] As was mentioned above, respect for private property rights can also make it easier for the existing elite to hold onto power. Thus, there is a delicate balance between striving for a truly egalitarian society and prefiguring respect for just laws (including private property rights) during the transition. Properly striking and maintaining that balance is one of the key challenges of a successful social revolution.

might be wise to temporarily peg the US dollar to the Canadian dollar (or some other comparably strong currency, such as the euro).[75]

From Liberal to Egalitarian Democracy

As was argued in Part I, democratizing states have served as *unwitting* vehicles for anarchist progress since the first wave of democracy began in the mid-1800s. Such progress, driven by elite-mass bargaining interactions and top-down concessions, has approached its limit in the neoliberal era. It was also argued in Part I that after the transition from liberal to egalitarian democracy, states can potentially become *conscious* promoters of anarchist progress and thereby catalyze further historical progress toward equal liberty. However, implementing this vision, which I have called libertarian social democracy, requires some degree of revolutionary success in all three realms of social life. I have thus far discussed revolutionary objectives in the political and economic realms of the USA. I turn next to a discussion about revolutionary objectives in the cultural realm.

7.4 Cultural Realm

The Challenge of Cultural Transformation

As has been mentioned, a successful social revolution requires transformative change in all three realms of social life: political, economic, and cultural. Perhaps the most basic challenge will be to open people's minds to the possibility of a post-state society. As Laursen (2021, p. 205) puts it, "For a social revolution to succeed, we first have to free our minds of the State." In some cases, transformative change may be more necessary in the cultural realm than in the political and/or economic realm. For example, the Israeli Knesset is elected by proportional representation (in the political realm), but some aspects of Israel's culture are not conducive to equal liberty.[76] Also, despite their transition to proportional representation in the

[75] This plausible suggestion broaches the topic of a possible role for a central bank and/or monetary policy in a democratic transitionary state and raises some interesting questions, such as whether an (independent) central bank is compatible with an egalitarian society. On the one hand, central banks can arguably play a beneficial role in promoting economic development. For example, international relations scholar Henry Nau (2021, p. 380) notes that "South Africa is one [of the few in Sub-Saharan Africa] that has an independent central bank, and its economic performance ranks among the best." On the other hand, market libertarians seem to believe that floating currency markets are preferred to a monetarist "managed float" overseen by a central bank. Like other institutional questions, a more in-depth exploration of this topic is beyond the scope of this chapter.

[76] For instance, a recent poll found that a large percentage of Israeli high school students did not favor equal rights for Israeli-Arabs. Kashti, O. (2010, March 11). *Poll: Half of Israeli High*

mid-1990s, by 2018, about 13% of New Zealand children (including 23% from indigenous Maori households) still lived in material hardship.[77] In the case of Sweden, political institutions conducive to anarchist progress have been adopted, and egalitarianism has been more-or-less sustained (Sigman & Lindberg, 2019, Fig. 3; Piketty, 2020, p. 260), leaving only the need for a cultural revolution (as well as an international context that allows for equal liberty maximization[78]).

Highlighting the challenge of cultural revolution, in *The End of Protest*, Micah White (2016, pp. 215–6) observes that, "To assimilate without coercion the forces within our body politic that still in their hearts hold allegiance to the old world is our great challenge […] the cultural struggle to awaken the hearts of millions is the most important revolutionary effort of all." Furthermore, according to White, "The individual and society at large are conservative and will tend toward continuing the same general course, even if it is known to lead to ecological collapse and species death."[79] White's observations highlight the challenge of cultural transformation as well as the essential need for it as part of a broader, successful revolutionary transformation. In what follows, I will focus on the transition from neoliberalism to libertarian social democracy as well as achieving a post-imperialist society.

From Neoliberalism to Libertarian Social Democracy

The Culture of Neoliberalism

In the USA, like other countries, a successful social revolution requires that the people accept some basic characteristics of a new cultural paradigm conducive to equal liberty maximization. One key aspect of culture is, of course, the system of ideological norms and social values that prevail.[80] Since the 1980s, the dominant ideational paradigm in the USA has been "the culture of neoliberalism" (Street,

Schoolers Oppose Equal Rights for Arabs. Haaretz. https://www.haaretz.com/1.5040299

[77] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2020, October 14). *NZ election: The people left behind in Ardern's "kind" New Zealand*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54444643

[78] Indicative of such international constraints, in the context of neoliberal globalization, governments' desire to attract private investment often leads them to offer tax cuts (undermining the welfare state) and deregulation (Piketty, 2020, pp. 356, 486). Other responses to the competitive pressures of neoliberal globalization have included varying degrees of privatization and a transition from rigid to light neo-corporatist systems of interest intermediation (weakening the bargaining strength of labor unions in the process) (Magone, 2019).

[79] On this point, a lyric from the punk rock band Bad Religion's song "All There Is" comes to mind. In it, guitarist and song writer Brett Gurewitz refers to "The walking wounded in a pageant of contenders, who balance on a rail of pain for just a pail of rain." The BR Page. (n.d.). *All There Is*. Retrieved January 13, 2023, from https://www.thebrpage.net/discography/song.asp?songName=All+There+Is

[80] According to Domhoff (2006, p. 113), "An ideology is the complex set of rationales and rationalizations through which a group, class, or nation interprets the world and justifies its actions." That definition corresponds with my understanding of the term.

2014, p. 134) and the neoclassical policy objectives with which it is associated (Campbell, 1998; Levy et al., 1997).[81] Wolfgang Streeck (2017, p. 46) describes neoliberal ideology as follows:

> Neoliberal ideological narratives offer a euphemistic reinterpretation of the breakdown of structured order as the arrival of a free society built on individual autonomy, and of de-institutionalization as historical progress out of an empire of necessity into an empire of freedom.

Most of the major policy problems discussed in the previous chapter emerged from and/or grew more severe since the current neoliberal paradigm took root in the 1980s. Margaret Thatcher once famously asserted that "there is no alternative" to neoliberalism. However, "the new hyper-inegalitarian narrative that has taken hold since the 1980s is not ordained by fate" (Piketty, 2020, p. 966). Still, to successfully refute Thatcher's assertion, one must provide an alternative vision (Singer, 1999, p. 4).[82] I will here apply one such alternative – libertarian social democracy – to the case of the USA.

Libertarian Social Democracy in the USA

Ideally, after the revolution, each country would strive for equal liberty in its own way, in accordance with its characteristics and circumstances. For instance, Piketty (2020, pp. 901, 918) distinguishes European federalism from that in other federal states and advocates a newly empowered European Assembly as well as a "social-federalist transformation of Europe." Underscoring the importance of developing a distinctly American revolutionary approach within the USA, Swedish anarcho-syndicalist Gabriel Kuhn observes that "if the left in the US wants to make mitigating capitalism's worst effects a priority – which is, basically, what social democracy has been doing in Europe throughout the twentieth century – it needs to develop its own visions and, particularly, strategies. If the focus ought to be on revolutionary politics, it would require a different framework altogether."[83] In the USA, the ideal post-revolutionary cultural paradigm should thus draw upon the primary sources of American social virtue, especially the libertarian and progressive traditions. Fortunately, the basic principles associated with these traditions can be readily

[81] Street (2014, p. 135) notes that "Beyond merely a set of corporate-friendly 'free market' policies […] neoliberalism is an ideology." According to Street, neoliberalism is "many sided (at once economic, political, ideological, cultural, and highly personal)" (p. 190).

[82] Similarly, Price (2013, p. 125) argues that overcoming capitalism "requires an understanding of how capitalism works [as well as] a vision of an alternate society." By contrast, Streeck (2017, p. 13) asserts that "For the decline of capitalism to continue […] no revolutionary alternative is required, and certainly no masterplan of a better society displacing capitalism."

[83] Guerrero-López, E., & Weaver, A. (2017, April 10). *Prospects for Social Democracy in the US: Insights from a Syndicalist in Sweden*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/prospects-for-social-democracy-in-the-us-insights-from-a-syndicalist-in-sweden/

applied to the libertarian social democratic framework in both the economic and political realms.

Libertarian Mixed Economy

In the economic realm, the new worldview would be social democratic in its recognition of the need for a mixed economy. As was implied in Chap. 3, such an economic landscape would include revitalized, solvent versions of the already existing but more-or-less attenuated public sectors. The public economic sphere might be further expanded into some new sectors as well, such as Medicare For All and certain industries (where expropriation is justified). In this vision, the public economic sphere would provide essential goods and services to the community, while free markets thrive in the private sphere.

Crucially, there must be a popular consensus in favor of the public economic sphere, in contrast to the neoliberal view that "Private is beautiful and public, by definition, wasteful" (Singer, 1999, p. 63).[84] In his book *Our Common Wealth: The Return of Public Ownership in the United States*, Thomas Hanna (2018, p. 146) explains that "[The] neoliberal 'consensus' has been at best quietly tolerant of public ownership in those instances where it supported profitability and financial extraction. More often, however, it has been outright hostile to it in almost all forms." Acceptance of a balanced, mixed economy would provide a timely recalibration of that view. Meanwhile, we can keep our eyes on the prize of libertarianism by encouraging voluntary sustainment of the essential public sectors. While the emphasis on the need for a vast public economic sphere should appeal to the progressive wing of the American electorate, the emphasis on volunteerism should appeal to those with a libertarian outlook.[85]

The Democratic Transitionary State

Just as taxes can be gradually reduced as volunteerism increases in the economic realm, so too can political power be decentralized as self-government proliferates in the political realm.[86] While progressives should be pleased with the normative

[84] In most European countries, there is already a "consensus that lack of money should never preclude access to health care and the continuing commitment to redistributive rules that sustain affordable universal coverage" (Brown, 2015, p. 52). Similar views amenable to the provision of social welfare would need to become widespread in the USA as well.

[85] This idea of applying volunteerism to the public economic sphere is fitting for the USA in that, while having comparatively low tax rates, the USA has experienced comparatively high levels of volunteerism and philanthropy (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004). As Paul Goodman observed, "Americans have always been quick to form voluntary associations" (Stoer, 1994, p. 154).

[86] It bears repeating that by *self-government,* I mean the extent to which individuals understand and voluntarily comply with just law (i.e., laws that advance or at least do not undermine equal liberty),

emphasis placed on just law and consensus, libertarians should be drawn to the potential for enhanced subnational autonomy. This "centralization question" (see Chap. 4) also bears an atavistic resemblance to the US Constitution ratification debate (1787–88) between Federalists and Anti-Federalists over how power ought to be balanced between national and subnational governments and might therefore provide a useful talking point when making the case for revolution.

Post-Imperialism

Imperialism in US History

As part of a successful social revolution, US culture must also become opposed to imperialistic foreign policies (broadly defined[87]). Examples of US imperialism can be found throughout the country's history, starting with westward expansion, the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, and the use of genocide and ethnic cleansing against Native Americans. Another early example of US imperialism is found in the Monroe Doctrine, which asserted that the USA would not tolerate any other foreign powers meddling in the affairs of Latin American countries.

Subsequent examples of US imperialism are found during the Spanish American War of 1898, including the conquest of Guam, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Later, during the Woodrow Wilson administration (1913–21), the USA disbanded Haiti's parliament after they refused to accept a US-written constitution permitting American corporations to buy up Haitian land (Chomsky, 2013, p. 13). The USA has also used an imperialistic foreign policy to ensure access to oil resources in foreign lands such as Saudi Arabia. In 1943, during the Franklin Roosevelt presidency, the Arabian-American Oil Company began developing and exploiting Saudi oil fields. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter articulated The Carter Doctrine, which states that "Any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America" (Frieden et al., 2019, p. 142).

During the Cold War, the USA intervened in a variety of countries, overthrowing democratically elected governments such as that led by prime minister Mohammed

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while *autonomy* is understood here as the extent to which individual or composite actors are free from state-based coercion. Equal liberty is realized where self-government and autonomy coincide.

[87] My understanding of the term *imperialism* corresponds with the definition provided by Merriam-Webster Dictionary: "the policy, practice, or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation, especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas." The following discussion includes examples of both direct and indirect USA control and thus seems to fall under the scope of this definition. Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Imperialism*. Retrieved January 13, 2023, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imperialism

Mossadegh in Iran in 1953.[88] Other Cold War interventions took place in Guatemala in 1954[89] and the subsequent "dirty war,"[90] the invasion of Cuba in 1961,[91] and Chile in 1973.[92] The Vietnam War led to over three million Vietnamese deaths[93] and caused birth defects resulting from the use of Agent Orange.[94] In the 1970s and 1980s, the USA also backed several dictatorships in Indonesia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala (Solomon, 1994, pp. 80–82). For instance, in El Salvador, a US-trained counterinsurgency force killed six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter.[95] In 1993, the USA also backed Boris Yeltsin in Russia after he unconstitutionally dissolved the Russian parliament (Solomon, 1994, p. 133). US-based non-governmental organizations also meddled in the affairs of post-Soviet states during Georgia's Rose Revolution in 2003, the Moldova uprising of 2009, and Ukraine's Euromaidan protests in 2014 (Magone, 2019, pp. 468–72).

Post-Cold War US interventions in Latin America include the invasion of Panama in late 1989,[96] and tacit support for the coup ousting President Manuel Zalaya in Honduras in 2009.[97] In 2004, John Bolton (then with the State Department) reportedly backed a coup to remove Haiti's democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In an interview with CNN's Jake Tapper in July 2022, Bolton admitted that he had "helped plan coups."[98] In 2019, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo as well as numerous mainstream US media sources voiced support for a

[88] Allen-Ebrahimian, B. (2017, June 20). *64 Years Later, CIA Finally Releases Details of Iranian Coup*. Foreign Policy. https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/20/64-years-later-cia-finally-releases-details-of-iranian-coup-iran-tehran-oil/

[89] Doyle, K., & Kornbluh, P. (Eds.). (n.d.). *CIA and Assassinations: The Guatemala 1954 Documents*. The National Security Archive. Retrieved June 15, 2020, from https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//NSAEBB/NSAEBB4/index.html

[90] Farah, D. (1999, March 11). *Papers Show U.S. Role in Guatemalan Abuses*. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/daily/march99/guatemala11.htm

[91] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2023, January 6). *Bay of Pigs invasion*. https://www.britannica.com/event/Bay-of-Pigs-invasion

[92] Maxwell, K. (2003, November 20). *The Other 9/11: The United States and Chile, 1973*. The New York Times. https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/cfr/international/20031101faessay_v82n6_maxwell.html

[93] Spector, R. H. (2020, April 28). *Vietnam War*. Encyclopaedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/event/Vietnam-War

[94] The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. (n.d.). *Agent Orange*. Retrieved June 15, 2020, from https://www.britannica.com/science/Agent-Orange

[95] Democracy Now. (2020, September 14). Salvadoran Ex-Colonel Convicted for 1989 Murder of Jesuit Priests. https://www.democracynow.org/2020/9/14/headlines/salvadoran_ex_colonel_convicted_for_1989_murder_of_jesuit_priests

[96] History.com Editors. (2019, December 16). *The U.S. invades Panama*. https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-u-s-invades-panama

[97] Valle, A. (2015, April 13). *Dancing with Monsters: The U.S. Response to the 2009 Honduran Coup*. Harvard Political Review. https://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/us-honduran-coup/

[98] Democracy Now. (2022, July 13). *John Bolton says he "helped plan coups" in foreign countries*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/7/13/headlines/john_bolton_says_he_helped_plan_coups_in_foreign_countries

right-wing coup against Bolivia's democratically elected president Evo Morales.[99] More recently, Jordan Gaudreau, a former US Green Beret and head of private security firm Silvercorp USA, led a failed attempt to overthrow Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro.[100] In June 2021, Haitian president, Jovenel Moïse, was assassinated by a group of Colombian mercenaries, four of whom had received military training at The School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia.[101]

The Clinton doctrine proclaimed that the USA was entitled to resort to unilateral force to ensure "uninhibited access to key markets, energy supplies, and strategic resources" (Chomsky, 2013, p. 58). In 2003, George W. Bush cited Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons against the Kurdish population as evidence in support of the US invasion of Iraq,[102] without acknowledging that the US government assisted Hussein in these and other crimes.[103] Later, after the USA carried out a drone strike against Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani, the Iraqi parliament voted for the USA to remove its military bases from the country.[104] However, in defiance of this and other Iraqi protests demanding a US withdrawal in late 2019 and early 2020, the USA *created* three new military bases.[105] Other examples of US

[99] Greenwald, G. (2020, June 8). *The New York Times Admits Key Falsehoods That Drove Last Year's Coup in Bolivia*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2020/06/08/the-nyt-admits-key-falsehoods-that-drove-last-years-coup-in-bolivia-falsehoods-peddled-by-the-u-s-its-media-and-the-nyt/

[100] British Broadcasting Corporation. (2020, May 7). *Venezuela TV shows US citizens confessing over failed coup*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-52568475

[101] Democracy Now. (2021, July 22). *Four Colombian Mercenaries Tied to Moïse Assassination were Trained at Fort Benning in U.S.* https://www.democracynow.org/2021/7/22/headlines/four_colombian_mercenaries_tied_to_moise_assassination_were_trained_at_fort_benning_in_us

[102] Hiltermann, J. R. (2003, January 17). *Halabja: America didn't seem to mind poison gas*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/17/opinion/IHT-halabja-america-didnt-seem-to-mind-poison-gas.html

[103] Arbuthnot, F. (2002, September 8). *How Did Iraq Get Its Weapons? We Sold Them*. Common Dreams. https://www.commondreams.org/headlines02/0908-08.htm

[104] Higgins, E. (2020, January 10). *We're Staying, US Tells Iraq After Being Asked to Leave*. Common Dreams. https://www.commondreams.org/news/2020/01/10/were-staying-us-tells-iraq-after-being-asked-leave

[105] Macleod, A. (2020, January 29). *US Military Announces Three New Bases in Iraq After Iraqis Demand Full Withdrawal*. Mint Press News. https://www.mintpressnews.com/us-announces-three-new-bases-iraq-iraqis-demand-full-withdrawal/264466/. Since then, in August 2020, the USA handed over control of Camp Taji to Iraqi security forces for the first time since the US invasion, although a strong US military presence remained in the country as of August 2020. Democracy Now. (2020, August 24). *U.S. Troops Withdraw from Camp Taji in Iraq*. https://www.democracynow.org/2020/8/24/headlines/us_troops_withdraw_from_camp_taji_in_iraq

imperial foreign policy (in this case, by proxy) include Israeli settler colonialism,[106] home demolitions,[107] and the disproportionate use of force in Palestine.[108]

Author David Masciotra writes, "America's willful ignorance when it comes to the use of its own military exposes the moral bankruptcy at the heart of its political culture. Even worse, it makes future wars all but inevitable."[109] No revolution would be complete without reversing this tendency. Outcomes of a successful cultural revolution might include joining the International Criminal Court, and indicting US officials guilty of war crimes, such as George W. Bush for the 2003 invasion of Iraq.[110] Another crucial step in the transition to a post-imperial society will be to properly acknowledge and rectify, to the extent possible, the USA's historical involvement with the slave trade as well as genocidal policies carried out against indigenous Americans. To begin, this could be as simple as removing statutes and monuments honoring colonial, slaveholding, and Confederate leaders.[111] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2014, pp. 235–6), in *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, arrives at the following conclusion, worth quoting in its entirety:

> Indigenous peoples offer possibilities for life after empire, possibilities that neither erase the crimes of colonialism nor require the disappearance of the original peoples colonized under the guise of including them as individuals. That process rightfully starts by honoring the treaties the United States made with Indigenous nations, by restoring all sacred sites, starting with the Black Hills and including most federally held parks and land and all stolen sacred items and body parts, and by payment of sufficient reparations for the reconstruction and expansion of Native nations. In the process, the continent will be radically reconfigured, physically and psychologically.

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[106] Democracy Now. (2019, November 19). *Noura Erakat: U.S. Recognition of Israeli Settlements Is "Entrenchment of an Apartheid Regime"*. https://www.democracynow.org/2019/11/19/noura_erakat_israeli_settlements_trump_announcement

[107] Puckett, L. (2019, July 26). *US blocks UN vote to condemn Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes*. The Independent. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-israel-palestine-un-vote-trump-homes-a9020906.html

[108] Lazare, S. (2014, July 28). *In "Ugly" Resolution, US Politicians Back Israel's Assault on Gaza*. Common Dreams. https://www.commondreams.org/news/2014/07/28/ugly-resolution-us-politicians-back-israels-assault-gaza

[109] Masciotra, D. (2019, August 2). *Tulsi: A Living Reminder of Iraq's Liars and Apologists*. The American Conservative. https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/tulsi-a-living-reminder-of-iraqs-liars-and-apologists/

[110] In May 2022, George W. Bush made a gaffe referring to the invasion of Iraq as a war crime (he meant to refer to Russia's invasion of Ukraine). While this in and of itself is not incriminating evidence, it highlights the US double standard when it comes to uses of force in the international arena. For a video of the gaffe, see: Palmer, E. (2022, May 19). *George Bush's Iraq-Ukraine Gaffe Sparks "War Criminal" Debate*. Newsweek. https://www.newsweek.com/george-bush-iraq-ukraine-invasion-war-criminal-1708040

[111] Many, though not all such statues were brought down in the context of the Black Lives Matter protests in June 2020. Magnarelli, T. (2020, June 26). *Protestors continue demand to remove Columbus statue in Syracuse, Walsh not ready to remove it*. WRVO. https://www.wrvo.org/post/protesters-continue-demand-remove-columbus-statue-syracuse-walsh-not-ready-remove-it

Democracy and Human Rights Promotion After the Revolution

After a successful social revolution, US culture should become a more proactive and consistent supporter of human rights, democracy, and international law, even when this goes against realist impulses.[112] Thus, for starters, a successful revolution in the USA would bring an end to foreign policies that are problematic from a human rights perspective, such as US support for Israeli settlement expansion and assaults on Palestinians or the backing of authoritarian governments in the Middle East such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Guriev and Treisman (2022, p. 216) also advocate "supporting democracy democratically," adding that "There is little evidence that military interventions to spread democracy work."

In his book *Just Freedom: A Moral Compass for a Complex World*, Philip Pettit (2014, p. 186) describes some aspects of the foreign policies of a just state. For instance, according to Pettit, a state that "counts as a good international citizen" should, among other things, "only favor action against an oppressive regime or assistance to an impoverished one that is multilateral in character and avoids clientelizing the recipient country." Such multilateral interventions should also adhere to international law and the UN Charter. Multilateral interventions without UN Security Council approval might be justified to prevent crimes against humanity and/or given a clear "responsibility to protect" civilians, but only after a good-faith attempt to acquire Security Council support has been made. More generally, the USA should be a strong supporter of multilateral institutions (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, p. 218).

From a realist perspective, the power vacuum left open by a weakening of US alliances and an end to US imperialism could be filled by other non-aligned powers.[113] How could the international community prevent a power vacuum from being filled by authoritarian countries such as China, Venezuela, or Iran? (Haggard & Kaufman, 2016, p. 353). As was implied by the discussion in Chap. 4, the larger

[112] While the US government spokespersons often describe the US foreign policy as being driven by liberal moralism (presumably, to maintain legitimacy), in practice, the US foreign policy conforms more to the realist perspective. As Mearsheimer (2014, p. 47) explains, "despite the U.S. commitment to spreading democracy across the globe, it helped overthrow democratically elected governments and embraced a number of authoritarian regimes during the Cold War, when American policymakers felt that these actions would help contain the Soviet Union." As another example of realism reflected in the US foreign policy, a justification often provided for the US military support to Saudi Arabia in its fight against the Houthi rebels in Yemen is that those rebels are essentially a proxy force fighting on behalf of Iran in the region. In contrast to that realist containment view, which has created a famine and led to war crimes in Yemen, a more just approach would be to work strictly through the United Nations to address concerns about Iranian expansionism, even if this is less effective at containing Iran. As the saying goes, *fiat justitia, ruat caelum* – "let justice be done, though the heavens should fall." (In most cases, the heavens probably wouldn't fall anyway).

[113] For example, as the USA withdrew its troops from Afghanistan in the Summer of 2021, the Taliban seamlessly began to take control over more of the country's territory. Schifrin, N., & Sagalyn, D. (2021, June 21). *Taliban gains Afghan territory, may seek "complete return to power" amid US withdrawal*. Public Broadcasting Service. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/taliban-gains-afghan-territory-may-seek-complete-return-to-power-amid-us-withdrawal

goal (with regard to international relations) should be to replace the realist balance of power with a liberal preponderance of power in which the ideal of collective security is achieved. Similarly, Mouffe (2013, p. 22) envisions a "multipolar world" with a "plurality of regional poles, organized according to different economic and political models without a central authority." Such an international order would rely less on nuclear and military deterrents and more on the promotion of international law and cooperation. Achieving such an objective would, in turn, set the stage for decentralization beyond the nation-state level (see Chap. 4 for a more thorough discussion of this vision).

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the basic objectives of a social revolution in the USA: adopting a new US constitution conducive to the elements of gradualist anarchism, achieving and sustaining an egalitarian (post-class) society, and ushering in a new cultural paradigm conducive to the pursuit of equal liberty at home and abroad. Of course, reasonable people may disagree about some aspects of this discussion, such as the optimal political institutions. As Przeworski (1991, p. 35) explains, "We have intuitions about the impact of presidentialism versus parliamentarism, we know the effects of alternative electoral systems […] but our current empirical knowledge leaves a broad margin for disagreements about institutional designs." The constitutional design I have described is only one of many potentially conducive to the public interest. Presumably, this would be one of the major topics for deliberation at a constitutional convention, as was the case during the Philadelphia Convention of 1787. Ultimately, however, a successful social revolution must encompass transformative change in the political-institutional, socioeconomic, and cultural-ideological realms. Achieving such objectives will require an effective revolutionary strategy, which is the focus of the following chapter.

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Chapter 8
Revolutionary Strategy



8.1 Introduction

Part II of this book has thus far presented an elite theoretic perspective on US politics (Chap. 5), demonstrated the moral justification for social revolution in the USA via a review of the recent political landscape (Chap. 6), and discussed revolutionary objectives in the political, economic, and cultural realms (Chap. 7). This chapter completes Part II with an examination of strategies for social change. Strategy is often overlooked or left implicit by advocates of transformative change, despite being essential to any such vision.[1] In this chapter, it will be argued that, as societies approach the limit of reformism in an unequal liberal democracy, a purer form of revolutionary strategy becomes optimal as a means to both harm minimization and social progress toward equal liberty. After a successful social revolution, in an egalitarian (post-class) setting, a new frontier of social progress opens up, and a hybrid (prefigurative-reformist) strategy becomes optimal. To make these arguments, the remainder of this chapter is organized into six parts: terminology, reformism versus revolution, the limits of reformism in the USA today, revolutionary coalition building, revolutionary tactics, and hybrid strategy after social revolution.

[1] Focusing solely on policy objectives, while ignoring strategy, is indicative of an "ignorance fallacy," i.e., assuming that those with political power are simply ignorant of good ideas and that, therefore, social progress requires only a clear argument for such ideas. Such arguments are fallacious in that social progress is hindered not only (if at all) by a lack of ideas but also by conflicts of interest with the powerful (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012, pp. 63–68).

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8.2 Terminology

Reformist Strategy

Strategy is here understood as a general term characterized by both the nature of tactics chosen and the type of outcomes or goals aimed for. In Part I of this book, a distinction between prefigurative and gradualist anarchism was emphasized. In this chapter, I will focus primarily on the distinction between revolutionary and reformist strategies.[2] *Reformist strategy* seeks changes via establishment (i.e., state-based) political institutions (including the two-party system in the USA) and strives for specific policy reforms. *Reformist tactics* include (i) attempts to persuade elected representatives to support particular reforms, (ii) campaigning on behalf of and/or voting for an electoral candidate or ballot measure, (iii) running for political office oneself, and (iv) in the economic realm, collective bargaining and strikes authorized by an official labor union. This understanding of reformist tactics corresponds roughly with the term "insider tactics" (i.e., working within the system).

Reformist objectives are strategic goals aiming for a single or larger set of specific policy changes. Examples of reformist objectives are the list of policy priorities identified in a political party's election manifesto or government reforms demanded by a protest movement. In the USA, recent demonstrations in response to mass shootings, police brutality, inhumane treatment of migrant families, sexual harassment, low wages in the fast-food sector, abortion rights, and more have generally sought specific policy goals and can thus be seen as pursuing reformist objectives. One can also distinguish between *minor (incremental) reforms* such as an increase in the minimum wage and *major (radical) reforms* such as a Green New Deal or Medicare For All in the USA.

Revolutionary Strategy

By contrast, *revolutionary strategy* avoids participation with establishment (i.e., state-based) political institutions and does not aim for specific policy reforms. *Revolutionary tactics* include (i) various forms of direct action (e.g., Food Not

[2] The revolutionary/reformist binary corresponds imperfectly with the prefigurative/gradualist binary emphasized in Part I. Prefigurative strategies (e.g., autonomous zones) are a type of revolutionary "outsider" tactic, as defined here, in that they exclude the use of state institutions. However, prefigurative strategies are not necessarily revolutionary. For example, revolutionary strategy, as defined in this chapter, aims for "one big event," while prefiguration (combined with reformism) can be viewed as part of a longer-term "process view" of social change (Raekstad & Gradin, 2020, p. 58). Conversely, revolutionary strategies are not necessarily prefigurative. For instance, mass demonstrations occur outside of state politics (and thus fall under the category of revolutionary "outsider" tactics, as defined below), yet might not aim to prefigure longer-term anarchist organizations.

Bombs kitchens, patching potholes in the street without government permission, taking down statues of colonial leaders), (ii) riots, protests, or demonstrations (especially those undertaken without government permission), (iii) the formation of autonomous zones and independent assemblies (e.g., the Occupy Wall Street general assemblies), and (iv) in the economic realm, independent union organizing and unauthorized "wild cat" strikes. So defined, the term revolutionary tactics is roughly synonymous with the term "outsider tactics" (i.e., working outside of the system).

Revolutionary objectives aim to fundamentally transform the political, economic, and/or cultural realms of society and do not demand or settle for specific policy reforms (minor or major). As was argued in the previous chapter, a successful social revolution would adopt a new constitution, overthrow the ruling class, and achieve a cultural paradigm shift, as needed to maximize equal liberty. Thus, for example, New Zealand's transition from a SMDP to a PR electoral system in the mid-1990s is an example of a major reform rather than a revolutionary outcome because an entirely new national constitution was not approved.[3]

Hybrid Strategy

Finally, *hybrid strategy* involves some blend of revolutionary and reformist tactics and objectives. This is the prevailing strategy of contemporary left-wing groups in the USA. As writer Charlie Ebert observes, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the left turned toward electoralism, and "Revolution was either out the window entirely or postponed to a distant future [such] that there was no point thinking about it."[4] Democratic socialists, for example, tend to argue for a hybrid ("two legs") strategy including electoral participation (Wetzel, 2022, p. 226). Similarly, the Socialist Party USA promotes electoral participation "to present socialist alternatives" as well as revolution as a longer-term objective.[5] John Halle and Noam Chomsky make a case for lesser evil voting on the grounds that Democratic Party representatives are more inclined to advance progressive reforms than Republicans.[6] In line with that view, "In the 2004 US elections, there were some anarchists who took the strategic decision to cast a ballot for John Kerry […] in order to avert what they saw as the much greater evil of a second Bush term" (Gordon, 2008, p. 97).

[3] Roughly corresponding with my emphasis on the three realms of social life, Lawson (2019, p. 5) defines a revolution as "a collective mobilization that attempts to quickly and forcibly overthrow an existing regime in order to transform political, economic, and symbolic relations."

[4] Ebert, C. (2020, July 10). *Has 2020 marked the end of progressive left electoralism?* Roar Magazine. https://roarmag.org/essays/has-2020-marked-the-end-of-progressive-left-electoralism/

[5] Socialist Party USA. (n.d.). *Statement of Principles of the Socialist Party USA*. Retrieved June 28, 2020, from https://www.socialistpartyusa.net/principles-points-of-agreement

[6] Halle, J., & Chomsky, N. (2016, June 15). *An Eight Point Brief for LEV (Lesser Evil Voting)*. The Noam Chomsky Website. https://chomsky.info/an-eight-point-brief-for-lev-lesser-evil-voting/

Table 8.1 Revolutionary, reformist, and hybrid strategies

	Revolutionary objectives	Reformist objectives
Revolutionary ("outsider") tactics	*Revolutionary strategy* Example: The May 1968 uprisings in France[a]	*Hybrid strategy* Example: Black Lives Matter protests in 2020
Reformist ("insider") tactics	*Hybrid strategy* Example: The Bernie Sanders presidential campaign[b]	*Reformist strategy* Example: Urging representatives to raise the minimum wage

[a]According to Reagan (2021, p. 159), "the May 1968 uprisings demonstrate that the student sector in collective revolt can, in conjunction with other sectors of the class, build power in democratic organizations and threaten revolutionary change."
[b]Although the Sanders campaign did not call for a new US Constitution (and in that sense did not have revolutionary objectives), he arguably promoted revolutionary change in the cultural and economic realms.

Arguing from a libertarian socialist perspective, Wetzel (2022) rejects electoral reformism but suggests that organizing for specific policy reforms (such as minimum wage increases) can contribute to revolutionary movement building.[7] Meanwhile, Michael Albert (2017, p. 190) has argued that the left bloc should welcome progressive reform-based change while also working toward the longer-term revolutionary vision. Table 8.1 shows how revolutionary and reformist tactics and objectives interact to create revolutionary, reformist, and hybrid strategies, along with an example of each.

8.3 Revolutionary Versus Reformist Strategy

Revolutionary Versus Reformist Strategy in the USA over Time

Overview of the Argument and Key Variables

When might reformism be more beneficial than revolutionary strategy? In this part of the chapter, I will address this question via an aggregated cost-benefit analysis, beginning with a comparison of the net benefits of reformism over time and then turning to a more in-depth comparison of reformism and revolutionary strategy in the current neoliberal era in the USA. It will be argued that, while reformism may have been more beneficial during the first (economically) liberal era (late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), in the current neo-liberal era, revolutionary strategy is more beneficial.[8]

[7] Similarly, Angela Davis (1981, p. 244) observed that "under capitalism, campaigns for jobs on an equal basis with men, combined with movements for institutions such as subsidized public child care, contain an explosive revolutionary potential."

[8] Several term-pairs correspond with the periods of the early twentieth century and that since the mid-1970s. For instance, one might distinguish between the first and second gilded ages, the mass

The net benefit of reformism can be assessed via a comparison of the primary benefits and costs of the strategy. The primary benefit of reformism is the magnitude of progressive social policy achieved. It is argued that the potential benefits of progressive reforms diminish over time as a country approaches the limits of liberal democracy (see discussion of section "Law of Asymptotes" below). Meanwhile, the (potential) cost of reformism concerns its contribution to systemic legitimacy. The degree of pluralism determines whether systemic legitimacy is a net good (pluralist) or net bad (elitist). In a context of democratic capitalism, the presence of an influential left-wing socialist party or movement, independent of capitalist interests, is viewed as the primary indicator of pluralism.

The First Liberal Era (Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries)

In what follows, I will briefly compare the net benefits of reformism in the USA during the first liberal era (late nineteenth and especially the early twentieth century), the post-World War II period (1945–75), and the current neo-liberal era (1975–present). During the first liberal era in the USA, the socialist movement had moderate-strong influence over policy as an outsider party (e.g., organized labor pressured political elites to advance the New Deal). At that stage, there were large policy benefits associated with the major reforms achieved. Meanwhile, the system itself was somewhat pluralist due to socialist influence (albeit as an outsider movement rather than a major party). Thus, the policy benefits of reformism arguably outweighed the low systemic legitimacy cost associated with participation in the democratic system at that time.

The Post-–World War II Era (1945–75)

During the post–World War II period (1945–1975), the socialist party was diminishing in influence in the USA, although the "new left" had also emerged in the 1960s. The socialists' policy legacy (e.g., the New Deal) was still in place. However, there was still some room for major reforms, especially concerning civil rights. Thus, after World War II, the policy benefits of reformism were moderate, and the effect of systemic legitimacy was a wash given moderate-weak left-wing influence (i.e., limited pluralism). Thus, after World War II, reformist and revolutionary strategies were about equally beneficial.

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and cartel party eras, the first and second "great transformations," the first and third waves of democracy, or the modern and post-modern eras. In the present discussion, I will use the terms *liberal era* and *neo-liberal era* to distinguish these two periods of time. These terms refer to the economically liberal ideology prevailing at those times and coincide with the periods of liberal and neo-liberal globalization.

The Neo-liberal Era (1975-Present)

During the current neo-liberal era (1975-present), the socialist party is no longer influential, and there is no major independent left movement inside or outside the party system. Meanwhile, we have more closely approximated the limit of social progress in a liberal democracy (although some room for major reform remains, as described in Chap. 6). Thus, the potential policy benefits are weak overall, and systemic legitimacy conferred via reformism is costly. It follows that, in the current neo-liberal era, the net benefits of revolutionary strategy outweigh those of reformism.

Segue to In-Depth Comparison of Strategies in the Current Era

Having briefly compared the net benefits of reformism over time, I turn next to a more in-depth comparison of reformism and revolutionary strategy in the current neoliberal era in the USA. In the following discussion, to demonstrate the advantage of revolutionary over reformist strategy, it will be necessary to break down the potential benefits of social movement strategy into two goals: utility maximization (or "harm minimization") and equal liberty maximization. It will also be necessary to break down the legitimacy costs into two types: policy legitimacy and participatory legitimacy.

Revolutionary Versus Reformist Strategy in the USA Today

Strategies Compared

In what follows, it will be argued that, in the current neo-liberal era in the USA, revolutionary strategy is more optimal than reformism, both in terms of achieving policy reform (maximizing individual utility, or "harm reduction") and in promoting progress towards social revolution (advancing equal liberty). To make this argument, I will compare revolutionary "outsider" strategy (including, but not limited to, prefigurative actions), direct democracy (i.e., referenda and initiative), and electoral reformism (that is, participation in the two-party system). As direct democracy occupies a middling position between revolutionary and reformist strategies (explained below), I will occasionally simplify the discussion by comparing only the latter two. In this discussion, the advantages and disadvantages of each strategy will be compared to each other rather than to doing nothing.

Goals Considered

It is useful, when comparing strategies, to distinguish between the reformist objective of utility maximization (or "harm minimization") and the revolutionary objective of equal liberty maximization. I will distinguish between those two primary goals here. Goal 1 concerns reformist objectives, specifically utility maximization or harm minimization. It is here accepted that progressive reforms are a good thing, both as a reformist objective (utility maximization/harm minimization) and as a revolutionary objective (building "scaffolding" toward revolutionary change, as will be discussed below[9]). *Progressive reforms* are understood as reforms that maximize utility and/or help build "scaffolding" toward a revolutionary transformation.

In contrast to concessions won via revolutionary strategies (with more diffuse benefits), the benefits of reformism should be more concentrated on those affected by the specific policy changes advocated by the reformists. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising (and understandable) that those directly affected by a policy become active in reforming (or enforcing) it. For example, Micah White (2016, pp. 230–1) describes various efforts he and his partner undertook in Binghamton, New York, to force a dry-cleaning business to abide by a noise ordinance (the dry-cleaner, located in their residential area, had acquired a very loud new tunnel washer, which made it difficult to sleep). However, in this discussion, the strategies will be compared based on their capacity to maximize *overall* public welfare, including (but not limited to) that of any specific individuals or groups directly affected by a reform.

Goal 2 concerns revolutionary objectives, especially achieving an egalitarian (post-class) society. While progressive reforms achieved are recognized as good, legitimacy conferred on an unequal democracy is considered bad, as systemic legitimacy maintains the current political system and its various policy injustices (reviewed in Chap. 6) while stifling progress toward equal liberty. It is perhaps a truism that legitimacy is essential to regime stability. As the late sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset (1959, p. 39) once noted, "stable authority is power plus legitimacy." More generally, historian Lawrence Stone (1972, p. 79) observed that "The most important cause, and symptom, of the decay of any government or institution is the loss of prestige and respect among the public at large." Moreover, according to political scientist Larry Diamond, "Both theory and political experience teach that regimes with spent legitimacy do not last."[10] In the discussion below, I will distinguish between two sources of systemic legitimacy: that conferred via progressive reforms achieved (policy legitimacy) and that associated with political participation (participatory legitimacy).

[9] In this context, reformist "scaffolding" (i.e., building up to revolutionary change) includes the resources acquired through progressive reforms as well as prefigurative organizations established and/or expanded in the process.

[10] Diamond, L. (2011, May 22). *A Fourth Wave or False Start?* Foreign Affairs. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2011-05-22/fourth-wave-or-false-start

Goal 1: Reformist Objectives (Utility Maximization)

All Three Strategic Approaches Can Achieve Reform

All three strategic approaches compared here can achieve progressive reforms: electoral reformism (insider tactics), direct democracy (insider-outsider hybrid tactics), and revolutionary strategy (outsider tactics). Direct democracy (i.e., referenda and initiative) can be understood as an insider-outsider hybrid tactic in that it still involves participation in the established political system (and is, in that sense, "insider") but also circumvents political elite control and special interest capture to some extent (and is, in that sense, "outsider"). To understand the magnitude of the progressive reforms achieved (from incremental to radical change) via these different tactics, it will be useful to distinguish between two political scenarios: an elite-mass bargaining interaction (where revolutionary tactics are optimal – the primary focus of the following discussion), and genuinely pluralist left-right divisions (where reformist participation is optimal).

Elite Theoretic and Pluralist Scenarios

In the first scenario, an elite-mass bargaining interaction (or what I called an elite cooptation game in Chap. 5), election outcomes are unimportant in the sense that leaders from either party will advance concessions as needed to maintain systemic legitimacy while oscillating in power over time. In such cases, revolutionary strategy is more efficient (as it does not waste time and resources on inconsequential electoral campaigns), and reformist movements are relatively ineffective (as they lack the leverage of a credible revolutionary threat to pressure elites to offer generous policy concessions). As was emphasized in Chap. 5, such elite-mass bargaining interactions should become more frequent as a democracy becomes increasingly unequal.[11]

In the second type of scenario, a genuinely pluralist left-right (rather than an elite-mass) division is reflected from the mass to the representative level. In that case, basic pluralist assumptions about partisan division as well as electoral accountability and choice remain valid. Whereas in the elite theoretic situation, partisan divisions are feigned by political elites to give the impression of pluralist electoral choice, in the genuinely pluralist theoretic situation, partisan divisions among political representatives are a more sincere reflection of those same divisions at the mass level. In those latter situations, participation in the established political system can maximize utility by contributing to democratic deliberation over essentially

[11] This is especially so in the absence of an influential socialist party, such as in the US today. As was mentioned previously, even in the unequal democracies of the first liberal era, the presence of an influential socialist party or movement ensured that some degree of pluralism was achieved (even if only through outsider influence on the major liberal and conservative parties).

contested issues (and thus more optimal outcomes). Such scenarios should be most common in an egalitarian democracy.[12]

Magnitude of Progressive Reforms Achieved

With regard to the magnitude of the progressive reforms won (from incremental to radical change) in an unequal democracy, top-down concessions in response to revolutionary outsider pressure should tend to be more radical than the reforms won via direct democracy (referendum or initiative), and direct democracy reforms should tend to be of a greater magnitude than incremental reforms achieved via electoral reformism. Revolutionary outsider tactics, such as mass protests or direct action, though less focused on particular reforms, may pressure the political elite to offer major reforms as concessions (Schmidt & van der Walt, 2009, p. 21).

For example, elites appear to have extended the right to vote in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to coopt socialist revolutionary threats (Przeworski, 2009). Hacker and Pierson (2020, p. 19) describe early-modern democratization as follows: "The many found it easier to organize, and the few found it harder and costlier to deploy the brute tools of coercion. In country after country, it was this shift in social and economic power that pressured elites to make political concessions – and, when things went well, to accept democracy" (p. 19). Also, the rise of working-class movements in the 1930s and 1940s was followed by the New Deal reforms, and social movements in the 1960s and 1970s led to major civil rights legislation (Wetzel, 2022, pp. 20–21). As James Scott (2012, p. 19) observes, "democratic progress and renewal appear […] to depend vitally on major episodes of extra-institutional disorder."

Reformism is sometimes supported on the grounds that reforms minimize harm to the wider population, especially the lower classes. For example, *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman (2020, p. 328) argued that Obama was justified in aiming for incremental change with the Affordable Care Act because it extended coverage to 20 million additional Americans. However, one could also argue plausibly that a left-leaning revolutionary movement at the time could have pressured elites to include the public health insurance option in the legislation. More generally, Solomon (1994, pp. 123–4, 192) explains how reformism can have the unintended consequence of perpetuating systemic harm, as follows:

> Amid all the talk of 'change', routine economic brutality is undisturbed. […] While multitudes of children and adults remain crushed against walls of structural cruelty, the president

[12] Of course, genuine partisan divisions can still be found on some issues even in an unequal democracy. For example, social issues such as abortion appear to sincerely divide Democrats against Republicans at both the elite and mass levels. While some genuine partisan divisions will remain even in an unequal democracy, it is here argued that, as a general approach and outlook, an elite theoretic perspective and revolutionary strategy will be more effective than a pluralist perspective and reformist participation.

> and Congress maintain the tradition of tacitly abetting their torment. […] False hope encourages passivity and unending patience, as precious opportunities slip away.

Goal 2: Revolutionary Objectives (Achieving a Post-class Society)

Two Paths to Revolution: "One Big Event" Versus The "Process View"

In their book *Prefigurative Politics*, Raekstad and Gradin (2020, p. 58) make a useful distinction between the "one big event" view – a single revolutionary event through which political power is seized (similar to what I advocate in this book)[13] – and a "process view" involving both reformism and prefigurative efforts (such as mutual aid, independent union organizing, or autonomous zones) as a means of gradually building "scaffolding" toward a social revolution. In this context, "scaffolding" can be thought of as additional resources acquired through progressive reforms, as well as prefigurative organizations established and/or expanded in the process.

More broadly, democratization itself can be viewed as part of the larger process of building "scaffolding" toward an egalitarian (post-class) society. Raekstad and Gradin (2020, pp. 58–9) identify with the process view, explaining that radical movements "must struggle for and win smaller changes in the short term and large-scale revolution in the long term." However, as was mentioned previously, all three strategies – revolutionary, direct democracy (ballot measures), and reformist – achieve progressive reforms in their own way and thus also help to build "scaffolding" toward revolutionary change.

Legitimacy from Reforms Won (Policy Legitimacy)

While each strategy can achieve progressive reforms and thus "build scaffolding" toward revolutionary change (good), in so doing, each strategy also confers policy legitimacy upon the political system (bad). That is, like progressive reforms achieved with reformist participation, concessions won as a by-product of revolutionary tactics also confer systemic legitimacy (i.e., popular acceptance) on the regime and therefore enhance its stability. In a similar vein, Uri Gordon (2012, p. 215) observes that "[political elites offer] minimal concessions that ameliorate the most

[13] The "one big event" approach has also been called a "ruptural" strategy (Wetzel, 2022, pp. 240–2). Such strategies can be either bottom-up, as with libertarian socialism (in which the "one big event" is "general strike expropriation" of all industry, as in Spain in 1936), or top-down, as with guerrillaism (e.g., China and Cuba) or seizure of state power by a "revolutionary vanguard party" (e.g., the Bolsheviks in Russia). The libertarian social democracy strategy (described below) is another example of a bottom-up "rupture," though possibly followed by the establishment of an egalitarian democratic transitionary state.

exploitative aspects of capitalism while contributing to the resilience of the system as a whole." Woodcock (1962, pp. 172–3) describes this as an "insidious dulling of the edge of resentment."

The degree of systemic legitimacy stemming from progressive policy reforms should correspond to the magnitude of those reforms (from incremental to radical). Thus, if outsider revolutionary pressures do yield more radical reforms than direct democracy (moderate reform) and electoral reformism (incremental reform), revolutionary strategy should, in that respect, also confer somewhat more systemic legitimacy than the other two strategies. For example, the democratizing reforms achieved by the first generation of socialist movements in the West allowed those parties to acquire seats in the legislature and thus shored up legitimacy for their political systems. As Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan explained in 1967, in a democracy, "grievances and attacks are deflected from the overall system and directed toward the current set of powerholders" (quoted in Magone, 2019, p. 79).

Good and Bad Effects of Progressive Reforms Cancel Out

As has been mentioned, progressive reforms (achieved via either reformist or revolutionary strategy) help to minimize harm (consistent with Goal 1) and to build "scaffolding" toward an eventual revolution (consistent with Goal 2). On the other hand, such reforms also confer policy legitimacy and stability upon the system of unequal democracy (against Goal 2). The reformist strategy not only achieves minor reforms but also confers limited policy legitimacy upon the system. Revolutionary strategy not only achieves major reforms but also confers substantial legitimacy on the system. Thus, with either strategy, these good and bad effects would seem to cancel each other out. Also, while revolutionary strategies may confer more policy legitimacy than reformism through the policy concessions won, the differential between the magnitude of reforms achieved via revolutionary and reformist strategies should narrow over time as the limit of social progress in an unequal democracy is approached (see section "Law of Asymptotes" discussed below).

Legitimacy from Participation (Participatory Legitimacy)

Systemic legitimacy stems from policy concessions won (as was just discussed), as well as participation in the political system, which I will call participatory legitimacy. How much will the three strategic approaches – revolutionary, direct democracy (ballot measures), and reformist – contribute to *participatory* legitimacy? It seems clear that electoral reformism confers the most participatory legitimacy, while outsider revolutionary strategy (which abstains from establishment politics by definition) erodes such legitimacy. In between those two poles, direct democracy should have a neutral overall effect on legitimacy.

On the one hand, direct democracy undermines systemic legitimacy in that it conveys a message of opposition toward political elites, in line with the messages of

early-1900s progressive-populists campaigning for the initiative, referendum, and recall elections in the USA. Even with some elite influence over direct democracy (e.g., via campaign spending[14]), such campaigns should still have some populist appeal. On the other hand, direct democracy is also reformist in the sense that it still involves participation in the established political system (by casting a ballot) and thus confers some participatory legitimacy. For instance, I found that direct democracy campaign contact in Escambia County, Florida, stimulated less educated voters to cast a ballot in 2016 (Williams, 2020).

Meanwhile, revolutionary strategy works against participatory legitimacy by promoting abstention from the established political system. As political scientist Judith Best (1995, p. 29) explained, "Every vote that is not cast may be interpreted as a vote of no confidence, as a failure of consent, as a rejection of the election, and there is a point at which formally cast votes do not suffice for legitimacy." Cross-national analysis has confirmed that political participation is an expression of legitimacy for that political system (see Sigman & Lindberg, 2019, p. 598). In sum, while revolutionary strategies may increase systemic legitimacy more than reformism through the policy concessions won, this differential is outweighed by the participatory legitimacy conferred by reformist participation.

Law of Asymptotes

The Law of Asymptotes Applied Domestically

In comparative democratization studies, the *law of asymptotes* holds that "as the number of democracies increases, the number of remaining cases that are even theoretically available for democratization shrinks" (Haggard & Kaufman, 2016, p. 352). Applied to the domestic politics of a particular country, the law of asymptotes suggests that, as liberal democracies consolidate over time, there are fewer progressive reforms to be won, and social progress will therefore level off. However, beyond the limits of unequal liberal democracy (that is, after the revolutionary transition to libertarian social democracy), a new frontier of social progress awaits: what might be described as an era of anarchism.[15]

[14] As Wetzel (2022, p. 230) notes, referenda and initiatives are often heavily influenced by moneyed interests who control the media blitz and fund signature gatherers to get their preferred measures on the ballot.

[15] Recall that the libertarian social democratic vision (described in Part I) introduces new social objectives beyond liberal democracy, guided by the elements of gradualist anarchism. Thus, the limits of social progress in an unequal liberal democracy cannot be expanded because a fuller realization of equal liberty is not yet recognized as a goal by reformist movements and because revolutionary goals are not concessions political elites can offer without undermining their own privileged positions.

Liberal Democracy Is Less Distant from Equal Liberty

In an unequal liberal democracy, the ruling class can be viewed as "backed into a corner," in that the masses are better positioned to build a revolutionary movement, and political elites will tend to be under greater pressure to appear responsive to public preference.[16] For instance, Tormey (2015, p. 46) mentions that following the first wave of democratization in the nineteenth century, "those exercising power had to be mindful of and accountable to those being represented." For example, during the first wave of democratization, in the mid-late 1800s, conservative politicians such as Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck "sought to address the material needs of the newly enfranchised" (Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 22). To be responsive in democracies today, "politicians use polls to determine what policies the public favors and tailor their programs accordingly" (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, p. 127).

It can thus be argued that (if a ruling class still exists) liberal democracies are *less distant* from equal liberty than their authoritarian counterparts. Also relevant, Shawn Wilbur paraphrases a passage from Proudhon's *General Idea of Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* as follows: "democracy is, first and foremost, the last stand of absolutism, the ultimate rear-guard action of government in retreat."[17] Moreover, given the legitimacy-conferring effect of democratization, Alexander Berkman was probably correct when he wrote that "The democratic authority of majority rule is the last pillar of tyranny. The last, but the strongest" (quoted in Lundström, 2018, p. 40).

The Limits of Reformism

Near the asymptote of an (unequal) liberal democracy, most major rights have been won, with more-or-less room remaining for additional progressive reforms (depending on just how close the polity is to its limit[18]). It makes sense to speak of the limits of reformism in an unequal democracy, as a ruling class can only grant so many concessions before it begins to undermine its own power and privilege (Malatesta, 2015, p. 73). Near the asymptote of liberal democracy in the USA, given reformist politics as usual, the two-party regime will continue to oscillate in power, increasing the generosity of policy concessions as needed to maintain systemic legitimacy and

[16] In the following discussion, my references to liberal democracy are primarily references to unequal democracy. However, as was noted in Chap. 1, liberal democracies can also be egalitarian. In egalitarian liberal democracies (e.g., Sweden), only *cultural* transformation to libertarian social democracy is needed for equal liberty maximization. By contrast, in unequal liberal democracies (e.g., the USA), there is also a need for *socioeconomic* transition to egalitarianism.

[17] Wilbur, S. (2017, June 6). *Anarchy and Democracy: Examining the Divide*. Center 4 Stateless Society. https://c4ss.org/content/49277

[18] For example, given the problematic policy landscape of the US described in Chap. 6, there is still a fair amount of room remaining for progressive reforms within the US under the current two-party regime.

stability. More generally, where a ruling class exists, liberal democracies asymptotically approximate a post-class society but never quite get there.

Reformist movements cannot get us beyond the asymptote of liberal democracy because they aim for reformist rather than revolutionary changes and because political elites cannot pursue a deeper realization of equal liberty without undermining their own power and privilege. As Michael Albert (2017, p. 248) notes, "There is no threat great enough to get [elites] to give in and build a new society in which they no longer rule." Similarly, Lawson (2019, p. 16) mentions: "It is a rare elite that gives away its power voluntarily." Faced with a credible revolutionary threat, elites may offer a "pacted" (i.e., negotiated) transition that ushers in a new constitution and some remaining progressive reforms but leaves those elites more-or-less in power (Albertus & Menaldo, 2018). That is the limit of concession-based social progress toward equal liberty under liberal democracy. Only a commitment to revolutionary strategy will render the people unwilling to settle for less than a free and equal society, and thus immune to even the most generous forms of cooptation.[19]

Limits of Prefigurative Autonomous Zones

As was discussed in Chap. 2, anarchists have traditionally favored prefigurative strategies such as the establishment of autonomous zones, which could be understood as "one big step" toward revolutionary change *at the local level* (i.e., within that zone). However, without a successful revolution at the national level, the success of prefigurative autonomous zones is likely to be limited. For example, while the Zapatista movement stands out as a successful example of libertarian communism sustained in the Chiapas region of southern Mexico since 1994, documents leaked in October 2022 revealed that the Mexican government has been heavily surveilling the movement.[20] As another example, Nielsen (2020, p. 154) discusses the current limit reached in the Christiania autonomous zone, adjacent to Copenhagen, Denmark:

> After forty years of struggle and growth, Christiania has reached the physical limits of its area as well as a cap on its population size. Combined with the agreement signed with the Danish state and adoption of a form of property ownership (albeit collective), the danger of stagnation or reversal to private ownership is ever present.[21]

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[19] As a historic example, during the French Revolution, King Louis XVI offered to sign the Declaration of the Rights of Man, but the crowds refused to settle. French Revolution Documentary. (2015, July 17). *BBC Documentary The French Revolution* [Video; 36:00–36:30]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCCgb0UOYGs. A more recent example is found during Egypt's 2011 revolution, when protestors refused to accept Mubarak's promise to resign at the end of his term of office, thus forcing him to resign even sooner (Lawson, 2019, pp. 211–2).

[20] Democracy Now. (2022, October 12). *Guacamaya Leak Reveals Mexican Gov't Sold Arms to Drug Cartels, Spied on Reporters*. https://www.democracynow.org/2022/10/12/headlines/guacamaya_leak_reveals_mexican_govt_sold_arms_to_drug_cartels_spied_on_reporters

[21] Like Sweden, Denmark is among the more egalitarian democracies, and has political institutions conducive to equal liberty maximization. In that case, the two main constraints on further progress

In a liberal (or illiberal) democracy, the tolerance of local autonomous zones by political elites might be viewed as just another top-down concession and thus subject to the same law of asymptotes described above. This is not to say that prefigurative strategies are ineffective, but rather that, on their own, they are insufficient for achieving equal liberty at the national level. Rather than (or, in addition to) establishing autonomous zones and prefigurative organizations, it is optimal to aim for national revolution as "one big event," after which that national government might promote equal liberty by lending support to prefigurative organizations and autonomous zones and by enacting other just laws as needed to maximize equal liberty. *After* a successful social revolution, such a hybrid approach, rather than a purely prefigurative strategy, would be equal liberty maximizing (I return to this topic later in this chapter).

In Sum: Revolutionary Strategy Is Optimal in Unequal Democracies

Even if one accepts the "process view" of using prefigurative and reformist strategies to help prepare a society for social revolution, at some point "one big step" toward revolution must be taken. The question is when? The answer suggested here is: When the net benefits of revolutionary strategy outweigh those of reformist strategy. Based on the preceding discussion, we can conclude that revolutionary strategy will be optimal beyond some level of inequality, at which point (i) revolutionary strategy becomes more effective than reformism at achieving progressive reforms, and (ii) systemic legitimacy switches from a good to a bad. We're clearly beyond that point today, as demonstrated in the following survey of reformist efforts in the USA.

8.4 Limits of Reformism in the USA

Circumventing the Two-Party System

The Challenge of Minor Party Success in the USA

There are two basic reformist paths to achieving comprehensive policy change at the national or sub-national levels in the USA: circumventing the two-party system via a minor party or attempting to transform the major parties from within. In this discussion, I will focus primarily on such efforts on the left side of the political spectrum, beginning with the minor party approach. Recent polling has shown that most Americans are not satisfied with the two major parties and prefer a third-party

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toward equal liberty appear to be domestic culture as well as the competitive pressures of neoliberal globalization.

option.[22] Thus, it is not surprising that there have been efforts to promote third-party development.

The main problem with minor party approaches is that they have very little chance of success, especially at the national level. The primary reason is explained by Duverger's Law: unlike many European countries, the USA does not have a proportional system of representation, which would make it easier for minor parties to gain a foothold in the party system. Other barriers to third-party success include state-level ballot access laws (e.g., primary signature requirements[23]) and limits on who can participate in national debates by the Debate Commission.[24] Given such barriers, it is highly unlikely that a multi-party system can develop at the national level in the USA without a more comprehensive revolutionary transformation.[25]

Minor Party Attempts in Recent US History

Attempts to circumvent the two-party system have a long history in the USA. For instance, the Socialist Party made numerous electoral gains at the local level in the early twentieth century (discussed below). More recently, Kshama Sawant of the Socialist Party was elected to the Seattle City Council in 2013 and re-elected in 2015 and 2019. In 2019, Sawant narrowly defeated Egan Orion (52–48%), a candidate backed by Amazon and the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce.[26] Sewant also narrowly defeated a recall effort in December 2021.[27]

Sawant has been able to advance some progressive reforms in Seattle, such as raising the minimum wage to 15 dollars per hour, empowering cleaners and home

[22] Reinhart, R. J. (2018, October 26). *Majority in U.S. Still Say a Third Party is Needed*. Gallup. https://news.gallup.com/poll/244094/majority-say-third-party-needed.aspx

[23] Fair Vote. (2015, January 13). *The Worst Ballot Access Laws in the United States*. https://www.fairvote.org/the-worst-ballot-access-laws-in-the-united-states

[24] Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting. (2000, September 27). *FAIR Denounces Debate Commission's Exclusion of Minor-Party Candidates*. https://fair.org/article/fair-denounces-debate-commissions-exclusion-of-minor-party-candidates/

[25] The transitions from majoritarian to proportional systems of representation (PR) in Western Europe took place in the context of rising socialist revolutionary movements in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Since World War II, New Zealand has been the only country to permanently transition from a majoritarian system to PR (specifically, a mixed-member proportional system). Japan and Italy also transitioned to mixed proportional systems in the early 1990s, although they already had PR systems in place.

[26] Beekman, D., & Brunner, J. (2019, November 10). *Amazon lost the Seattle City Council elections after a $1 million power play. Will it see a new head tax?* The Seattle Times. https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/amazon-lost-the-seattle-city-council-elections-after-a-1-million-power-play-will-it-see-a-new-head-tax/

[27] Golden, H. (2021, December 17). *Seattle socialist Kshama Sawant keeps city council seat after recall election*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/dec/17/seattle-kshama-sawant-city-council-recall-election

care-givers,[28] and passing a progressive tax on CEOs and professional athletes in July 2020.[29] Sewant and her supporters have encountered some barriers as well. For instance, in June 2018, the Seattle City Council, under pressure from Amazon, Starbucks, and others, rescinded a tax on big business it had recently passed.[30] More importantly, Sewant was the only Socialist Party representative elected in the USA at the city level or higher as of June 2021.

There are many other examples of minor parties in recent US history. For instance, Norman Solomon (1994, p. 84) recalls that "the newly formed Citizens Party nominated Barry Commoner to run for president in 1980 [but] did not generate wider support, and could not break through mass-media censorship." Consumer advocate Ralph Nader ran for president with the Green Party in 1996 and 2000, with the Reform Party in 2004, and as an independent in 2008. Jesse Ventura famously won the governor's race in Minnesota as a Reform Party candidate in 1998, the party's only candidate to win a major government office. Other examples of minor (or non-)party governors are Walter Hickel of the Alaskan Independence Party and non-partisan Lowell Weicker of Connecticut, both elected in 1990 (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 110). The Libertarian Party, the third-largest political party in the USA by voter registration as of 2021, won a seat in the Wyoming House of Representatives in 2020 but hasn't acquired seats at the national level yet.

During the 2016 presidential elections, Sam Husseini's Vote Pact idea promoted a tactic where pairs of right-libertarians and left-progressives agreed to vote for their preferred minor party candidate to neutralize any "spoiler effect" (where voting for a minor party candidate unintentionally helps the less desired major party candidate).[31] In his book *The End of Protest*, Occupy Wall Street co-founder Micah White (2016, pp. 111–4) refers to the growth of "hybrid movement-parties" such as Podemos in Spain and the Five Star Movement in Italy, arguing that such parties are "shifting the destiny of protest." Among other ideas, White has also promoted a strategy for winning local elections in rural districts in the USA. However, as Piketty (2020, p. 927) recognizes, there are "fairly obvious limits to what can be achieved unless those [local] actions are complemented by higher level regulations and policies."

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[28] Eidelson, J. (2018, July 24). *Nannies of the Northwest, Unite! Seattle Tests a New Labor Model*. Bloomberg. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-07-24/nannies-of-the-northwest-unite-seattle-tests-a-new-labor-model

[29] Westneat, D. (2020, July 3). *Call it the "boss tax": Seattle finally finds a potent way to tax the rich*. The Seattle Times. https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/call-it-the-boss-tax-seattle-finally-finds-a-potent-way-to-tax-the-rich/

[30] Weise, E. (2018, June 12). *In a fast about-face, Seattle caves to Amazon, overturns landmark corporate head tax*. USA Today. https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2018/06/12/seattle-may-cave-amazon-overturn-corporate-head-tax/693921002/

[31] Husseini, S. (2013, July 28). *The "Unusual" Yet Ubiquitous Left-Right Alliance: Toward an Anti-Establishment Center*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/the-unusual-yet-ubiquitous-left-right-alliance-towards-an-anti-establishment-center/

Transforming the Democratic Party

Some Early Attempts to Transform the Democratic Party

Another common reformist approach on the left is to transform the Democratic Party from within. For instance, in 1934, socialist Upton Sinclair ran for governor of California as a Democrat, campaigning to "End Poverty In California" (EPIC). In that case, Sinclair won the party nomination but was defeated by incumbent Frank Mirriam by a wide margin. Sinclair was also denounced by activists within the Socialist and Communist Parties on the grounds that a separate party was needed (Domhoff, 2006, pp. 143–4).

Anti-war candidate George McGovern spearheaded major reforms to the Democratic Party primary system in 1968 and won the Democratic nomination in 1972, but lost in a landslide to Richard Nixon that November. Other early attempts to transform the Democratic Party include Tennessee senator Estes Kefauver who ran in the presidential primary in 1952 advocating integration in the South, support for antiwar liberals who entered the Democratic Party primaries in 1968, and civil rights leader Jesse Jackson who ran for president in 1984 and 1988 (Domhoff, 2006, pp. 143–4).

Electing Progressive Democrats

Progressive District Attorneys and Local Representatives

Some progressive district attorneys have been elected at the local level in recent years and have achieved some policy successes. For example, after being elected in 2017, Philadelphia's Larry Krasner has been able to achieve several key reforms, such as ending cash bail for minor offenses, promoting juvenile rehabilitation, keeping his pledge to not seek the death penalty (despite strong pressure to seek it), and refusing to prosecute victimless crimes. Krasner has also pursued greater accountability for police misconduct, for instance, by preventing courtroom testimony from officers who used excessive force or violated civil rights.[32] Another progressive Democrat, Karen McDonald, was elected as Prosecuting Attorney in Detroit, Michigan, in 2019.[33]

Like minor parties and progressive candidates within the Democratic Party, progressive district attorneys have encountered some limits on their ability to advance a progressive agenda. For example, after Wesley Bell was elected as St. Louis County's Prosecuting Attorney on a progressive platform, amidst the uprising over

[32] Krasner's reforms are documented in this docu-series: Public Broadcasting Service. (2021, April 20). *Philly D.A.* https://www.pbs.org/video/philly-da-vuyiid/

[33] Cunningham-Cook, M. (2020, August 5). *Rashida Tlaib and Slate of Local Wins Signal Progressive Revival in Michigan*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2020/08/05/michigan-rashida-tlaib-election/

the police killing of Michael Brown, he was unable to hold the accused officer accountable.[34] As another setback for the progressive district attorney movement, San Francisco's Chesa Boudin was ousted in a recall election in June 2022.[35]

After defeating Byron Brown, the incumbent mayor of Buffalo, New York, in the June 2021 Democratic Party primary, democratic socialist India Walton was defeated by Brown via a write-in campaign during the general election in November 2021. Walton was not endorsed by New York Democratic Party leaders such as Governor Kathy Hochul and Chairman Jay Jacobs, although she was endorsed by US Senate Majority leader Chuck Schumer.[36] Other democratic socialist candidates did win at the local level in November 2021, such as Michelle Wu who became the mayor of Boston.[37]

Progressive Democrat Victories in Congress

More recently, several progressive candidates affiliated (or ideologically aligned) with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) have had some electoral success in Democratic Party primaries. For instance, in June 2018, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez won an upset electoral victory over incumbent Joe Crowley for New York's 14th congressional district.[38] Glenn Greenwald commented that "[Ocasio-Cortez's] victory Tuesday is a titanic blow to the party establishment that backed Hillary Clinton from the progressive wing that rallies around Senator Bernie Sanders."[39] Dr. Abdul El-Sayed, a progressive Democratic Party candidate for governor of Michigan in 2018, speaking with Jeremy Scahill, also expressed hope for transforming the party following Ocasio-Cortez's win.[40]

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[34] Speri, A. (2020, August 27). *Can "Progressive" Prosecutors bring Justice to Victims of Police Violence?* The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2020/08/27/wesley-bell-michael-brown-darren-wilson-ferguson-police/

[35] Bidar, M. (2022, June 8). *San Francisco votes overwhelmingly to recall progressive DA Chesa Boudin*. CBS News. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/chesa-boudin-san-francisco-da-recalled/

[36] Slattery, D. (2021, November 2). *Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown's write-in campaign results in early lead over socialist India Walton*. Yahoo News. https://news.yahoo.com/buffalo-mayor-byron-brown-write-025300875.html

[37] CBS Boston Staff. (2021, November 2). *Who is Michelle Wu? Boston Elects New Mayor in Historic Race*. https://boston.cbslocal.com/2021/11/02/michelle-wu-boston-mayor-election/

[38] Steinbuch, Y. (2018, June 27). *Inside the upset that has the Democratic establishment reeling*. The New York Post. https://nypost.com/2018/06/27/how-ocasio-cortez-blindsided-heavily-favored-crowley/

[39] Abunimah, A. (2018, June 27). *Supporter of Palestinian Rights wins huge upset in New York election*. The Electronic Intifada. https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/supporter-palestinian-rights-wins-huge-upset-new-york-election

[40] Intercepted Podcast. (2018, July 11). *A Judicial Coup, the Carceral State, and the War Against Us All*. https://theintercept.com/2018/07/11/a-judicial-coup-the-carceral-state-and-the-war-against-us-all/

In the context of the June 2020 George Floyd protests, Ocasio-Cortez and several other progressive candidates (Jamaal Bowman in New York, Marie Newman in Illinois, and Henry Cuellar in Texas) again won Democratic Party primary victories.[41] Another progressive candidate victory occurred in Ferguson Missouri, during the August 2020 Democratic Party primary, when Black Lives Matter activist Cori Bush defeated long-time representative Lacy Clay.[42] Also, in August 2020, two progressive "Squad" members – Rashida Tlaib (Michigan) and Ilhan Oman (Minnesota) – defeated well-financed primary challengers for their House seats.[43] Furthermore, on September 1, 2020, Green New Deal co-author Ed Markey defeated establishment candidate Joe Kennedy III in the Democratic Party primary for the US Senate in Massachusetts.[44]

Limits of Progressive Democrat Success in Congress

While many progressives are encouraged by such electoral victories, the overall success of left-leaning (progressive or democratic socialist) Democrats remains limited. For instance, in 2018, only 5 of the 60 candidates endorsed by one of the progressive Democratic Party organizations – DSA, Our Revolution, Justice Democrats, and Brand New Congress – won in "blue" districts.[45] That year, Democratic Party establishment candidates won many more victories over their progressive challengers.[46] After the progressive primary victories during the June 2020 George Floyd protests, Black Caucus chairman Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-NY) plausibly cautioned against reading too much into the victories.[47] Corroborating Meeks' observation, in August 2021, Nina Turner, co-chair of Bernie Sanders' 2020 campaign, was defeated in a Democratic Party primary (for a Cleveland congressional

[41] Ferris, S., Mutnick, A., & Caygle, H. (2020, June 24). *Progressives snatch much-needed wins in primary gauntlet*. Politico. https://www.politico.com/news/2020/06/24/progressives-primary-justice-democrats-338488

[42] Grim, R. (2020, August 5). *Down Goes Clay: Cori Bush Knocks Off Half-Century Dynasty*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2020/08/05/cori-bush-lacy-clay-primary/

[43] Johnson, J. (2020, August 12). *Ilhan Omar Soundly Defeats Big-Money Challenger*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/ilhan-omar-soundly-defeats-big-money-challenger/

[44] Democracy Now. (2020, September 2). *Green New Deal Co-Author Sen. Ed Markey defeats Joe Kennedy in Mass. Primary*. https://www.democracynow.org/2020/9/2/headlines/green_new_deal_co_author_sen_ed_markey_defeats_joe_kennedy_in_mass_primary

[45] Street, P. (2018, August 12). *So, How's that Major-Party Election Madness Working for Us?* Truth Dig. https://www.truthdig.com/articles/so-hows-that-major-party-election-madness-working-for-us/

[46] FiveThirtyEight. (2018, June 28). *Politics Podcast: What Does Ocasio-Cortez's Win Tell Us About the Democratic Party?* https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/politics-podcast-what-does-ocasio-cortezs-win-tell-us-about-the-democratic-party/

[47] Ferris, S., Mutnick, A., & Caygle, H. (2020, June 24). *Progressives snatch much-needed wins in primary gauntlet*. Politico. https://www.politico.com/news/2020/06/24/progressives-primary-justice-democrats-338488

seat) by Shontel Brown, who was backed by the Congressional Black Caucus and Hillary Clinton.[48]

One problem with electing left-leaning Democrats to office is that, even if they remain true to their progressive pledges, they enter an institutional context through which achieving radical reforms is nearly impossible, especially at the national level. As Norman Solomon (1994, p. 188) observed, "even the most laudable politicians are hardly flawless, and would not be able to bring about basic change even if they were 'perfect.'" Indicative of this limit, after the progressive "Squad" – Ilhan Omar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ayanna Pressley, and Rashida Tlaib – voted against Republican Party immigration legislation in July 2019, Democratic Party leader Nancy Pelosi mocked them for casting the only four opposition votes.[49] Also, Ocasio-Cortez's Green New Deal proposal was swiftly defeated in Congress when Democratic Party leaders blocked the formation of the corresponding select committee in December 2018.[50] According to Laursen (2021, p. 206), "When a Green New Deal resolution was introduced in the U.S. Senate in 2019, it was defeated 0–57, most Democrats voting 'present' rather than risk being stuck with the label [of being anti-Green New Deal]."

The reformist strategy also relies on left-leaning Democrats remaining true to their progressive campaign pledges. Often, even those on the left side of the spectrum become more pragmatic. According to writer and editor Gilad Edelman, "winning requires engaging in politics, and politics requires some degree of pragmatism – a recognition that the achievable will always fall short of the ideal."[51] Also relevant, Wetzel (2022, p. 230) notes that "radicals elected to office are likely to back away from radical measures for fear of losing middle-class votes." In line with such observations, Paul Krugman anticipated that, if Bernie Sanders was elected in 2020, he "would have to deal with a Congress (and a public) considerably less radical than he is and would be obliged to settle for a more modest progressive agenda."[52]

Indicative of such pressures, despite campaigning to abolish the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, *on her first day in office,* Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, along with other progressive Democrats such as Rashida Tlaib, voted to

[48] Martin, P. (2021, August 5). *Democratic Party establishment prevails over Sanders-backed candidate in Cleveland primary*. World Socialist Web Site. https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/08/06/dems-a06.html

[49] Grim, R. (2019, July 18). *Chuck Schumer, In Meeting with Progressive Caucus*. The Intercept. https://theintercept.com/2019/07/18/border-bill-chuck-schumer-congressional-progressive-caucus/

[50] Kaufman, A. C. (2018, December 20). *Democrats Just Blocked Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Push for a Green New Deal Committee*. Huffington Post. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/kathy-castor-climate_n_5c1c0843e4b08aaf7a869cfd

[51] Edelman, G. (2018, July/August). *The Socialist Network.* The Washington Monthly. https://washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/july-august-2018/the-socialist-network/

[52] Krugman, P. (2020, January 31). *Does It Matter Who the Democrats Choose?* The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/31/opinion/does-it-matter-who-the-democrats-choose.html

fund the agency.[53] As another example, progressive "Squad" member Ayanna Pressley, in July 2019, joined the Democrat Party majority in the House of Representatives by voting in opposition to the pro-Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement.[54] In sum, some successes notwithstanding, left-leaning Democrats lack the numbers to pass radical reforms and face strong pressure to become more pragmatic under the current circumstances.

Bernie Sanders Presidential Campaigns

After the Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011, Bernie Sanders's 2016 and 2020 presidential primary campaigns became focal points for left-leaning activism in the USA. Consistent with that point, Mark Bray writes, "many former Occupiers campaigned for Bernie Sanders in his failed bid for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination."[55] Sanders' campaigns received dedicated grass-roots support, as reflected by his fundraising successes,[56] large campaign rally turnouts,[57] and strong campaign ground game.[58] Despite these strengths, neither campaign was able to overcome the challenges associated with winning the Democratic Party presidential primary.

After his 2016 presidential campaign ended, Sanders fully endorsed establishment frontrunner Hillary Clinton and proceeded to campaign vigorously on her behalf. A similar development occurred after Sanders ended his 2020 campaign, at which point he endorsed establishment frontrunner Joe Biden. Sanders even went so far as to impose rules on his own delegates, limiting their ability to criticize the Biden campaign.[59] While Sanders remained loyal to establishment Democrats, the feeling towards Sanders from the establishment wing of the party was not mutual.

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[53] Jay, S. (2019, January 8). *Abolishing ICE by funding it*. LibCom. https://libcom.org/news/abolishing-ice-funding-it-07012019

[54] Puckett, L. (2019, July 26). *US blocks UN vote to condemn Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes*. The Independent. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-israel-palestine-un-vote-trump-homes-a9020906.html

[55] Bray, M. (2018, July 11). *Horizontalism: Anarchism, Power and the State*. The Anarchist Library. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/mark-bray-horizontalism.html

[56] Ewall-Wice, S. (2020, February 6). *Bernie Sanders raised $25 million in January*. CBS News. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/bernie-sanders-raised-25-million-in-january/

[57] Lazare, S. (2015, June 21). *Bernie Sanders rally in Denver draws one of the biggest crowds in election cycle*. Common Dreams. https://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/06/21/bernie-sanders-rally-denver-draws-one-biggest-crowds-election-cycle

[58] Villa, L. (2020, February 1). *Inside Bernie Sanders' Iowa Ground Game*. Time. https://time.com/5776016/bernie-sanders-iowa-ground-game/

[59] Leigh, G. (2020, May 23). *Bernie Sanders threatens delegates with removal if they criticize Biden*. World Socialist Web Site. https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2020/05/23/sand-m23.html

For instance, in a July 2018 meeting, establishment Democrats planned a "counter-revolution" against the Sanders wing of the party.[60]

After Sanders withdrew from his 2020 presidential campaign, the Joint Policy Proposals released in July 2020 by the Biden-Sanders task force did include some concessions to the Sanders-led coalition, such as canceling up to $10,000 in student debt and speeding up the transition to renewable energy.[61] However, the proposals did not advance Sanders's more radical proposals such as Medicare for All, tuition-free public college, total cancellation of student debt, and the Green New Deal.[62]

After Joe Biden entered the White House in January 2021, Sanders was made chair of the powerful US Senate Budget Committee.[63] However, with the slimmest possible majority of 50 Democratic Party votes in the Senate, it has so far been very hard for Sanders to spearhead radical reforms. An early sign of this difficulty was apparent when two pivotal centrist Democratic Party senators, Joe Manchin (West Virginia) and Kyrsten Sinema (Arizona), stated their opposition to ending the Senate filibuster.[64] The proposal to raise the minimum wage, initially attached to the COVID-19 relief bill passed by the House of Representatives in late February 2021, was dropped from the bill due in part to anticipated opposition from Democratic Party senators such as Joe Manchin.[65] In sum, as the Sanders campaigns demonstrate, progressive presidential candidates face high barriers in the Democratic primary, and any concessions won will tend to fall short of the radical reforms needed.

I have thus far explained, at an abstract level, the conditions under which revolutionary strategy will be more beneficial than reformism (or vice versa) and described a law of asymptotes according to which the scope for progressive reforms is limited in today's unequal liberal democracies. This limit was illustrated more concretely via a review of the left's recent reformist attempts in the USA. Having made the argument for revolutionary strategy, the remaining parts of the chapter will focus on

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[60] Johnson, J. (2018, July 23). *Corporate Democrats Plan "Counterrevolution" in the Midst of Progressive Success*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/corporate-democrats-plan-counterrevolution-in-the-midst-of-progressive-success/

[61] Murakami, K. (2020, July 10). *Biden and Sanders's Joint Higher Ed Recommendations*. Inside Higher Education. https://insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2020/07/10/biden-and-sanderss-joint-higher-ed-recommendations

[62] Pager, T. (2020, July 8). *Democrats' Joint Policy Proposals Largely Eschew Sanders' Agenda*. Bloomberg. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-07-08/democrats-joint-policy-proposals-largely-eschew-sanders-agenda

[63] Ponciano, J. (2021, January 13). *Market Fret Over Sanders' Role as Head of Budget Committee, Stocks Flat as Investors Brush Off Impeachment Plans*. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonathanponciano/2021/01/13/markets-fret-over-sanders-role-as-head-of-budget-committee-stocks-flat-as-investors-brush-off-impeachment-plans/

[64] Zhang, S. (2021, January 26). *Centrist Democrats Manchin, Sinema Side with McConnell to Protect the Filibuster*. Truth Out. https://truthout.org/articles/centrist-democrats-manchin-sinema-side-with-mcconnell-to-protect-the-filibuster/

[65] Marcetic, B. (2021, February 27). *On the Minimum Wage, Joe Biden Chose Failure*. Jacobin. https://jacobinmag.com/2021/02/minimum-wage-joe-biden-neera-tanden

revolutionary coalition building, revolutionary tactics, and a brief argument for hybrid strategy after a successful social revolution.

8.5 Revolutionary Coalition

Terminology and Roadmap for this Part of the Chapter

Partisan coalitions are defined here as those located either entirely on the left side or entirely on the right side of the ideological spectrum.[66] For instance, a partisan-left coalition could include progressive Democrats, members of the Green Party, democratic socialists, and socialists and communists (both libertarian and more authoritarian). A partisan-right coalition might include conservative Republicans, supporters of Donald Trump, the Libertarian Party, and market anarchists, for instance. *Non-partisan coalitions*, by contrast, are broad-based and seek ways to include groups from both sides of this left-right divide.

In the argument that follows, I will focus primarily on comparing libertarian socialism (a partisan-left approach) with libertarian social democracy (a non-partisan approach). It will be argued that a non-partisan (revolutionary) coalition – centrist overall on the left-right dimension but libertarian on the orthogonal authoritarian-libertarian dimension – would be most conducive to a successful social revolution in the USA. In making this argument, five aspects of revolutionary coalitions will be discussed: ideology (why a non-partisan approach), participant inclusivity (potential contributors to a revolutionary effort), the tradeoff between ideological cohesion and participant inclusivity, revolutionary organization, and international allies.

Coalition Ideology: Why Not a Partisan Left-Wing Approach?

Reason 1: Practical Challenges of Building a Socialist Revolutionary Movement Today

Historical Context: The Rise and Fall of the Socialist Party

As was discussed above, one can find examples of third-party electoral successes at the state and local levels in the USA. These include numerous Socialist Party electoral gains at the local level in the early twentieth century. For instance, the

[66] While a partisan coalition, as defined here, might include members of political parties, the term "partisan" refers here to ideological one-sidedness rather than to party affiliation per se. Thus, for example, I will describe the libertarian socialist revolutionary strategy advocated by Wetzel (2022) as a partisan-left strategy, despite his rejection of party-led revolutionary change.

Non-partisan League, created by a Socialist Party organizer, ran on a radical platform and, despite strong opposition from business leaders and mainstream politicians, won elections in North Dakota in 1916 and instituted much of the party's program, including the creation of The Bank of North Dakota (Domhoff, 2006, p. 143). By 1912, the highpoint of socialist electoral success in the USA, the party had elected 1200 members in 340 cities across the country, including 79 mayors in 24 different states, as well as 20 socialists in nine state legislatures including Wisconsin (7), Kansas (3), and Illinois (3) (ibid).

However, these wins were eventually undermined by the National Municipal League (a national policy-planning organization composed of developers, lawyers, political scientists, and urban planners) with several local election reforms such as off-year elections, non-partisan elections, citywide elections, the elimination of salaries for city councilors, and the creation of a city-manager form of government (Domhoff, 2006, pp. 145–6). Meanwhile, at the national level, "workers failed to gain a toehold in the political system because the government structure and electoral rules led inexorably to a two-party system" (ibid, p. 209).

Broadly speaking, the first generation of socialist parties that thrived in the early to mid-twentieth century were more-or-less successful in bringing about a transition from classic liberalism to social democracy in the West. For example, Sweden moved very quickly from inegalitarian capitalism to social democracy in the early twentieth century (Piketty, 2020, p. 189). A similar observation could be made about the USA, albeit to a lesser extent, given major reforms such as the New Deal. However, the socialist challenge to capitalism that first emerged during the nineteenth-century industrial revolutions (and crested in the early-mid twentieth century) finds no comparable movement in today's neoliberal context. As political scientist José Magone (2019, p. 96) explains,

> Until the 1960s [in Western Europe], social democratic and communist parties were able to mobilise large constituencies in the working class. It was the climax of the industrial Fordist age in which the working class in the industrial sector was the dominant social group. However, since the 1970s and 1980s, such support of the working class for social democratic and communist countries has been declining.

Panning out to the international level, Wolfgang Streeck (2017, p. 37) writes, "there is no such thing today as a global socialist movement, comparable to the socialisms that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries so successfully confronted capitalism in national power struggles." There are many interrelated reasons explaining why another socialist challenge to capitalism hasn't emerged in the neoliberal era. In what follows, I will briefly discuss the recent historical context as well as some ideological developments on the left side of the political spectrum.

Developments During the Neoliberal Era (1975–Present)

As was discussed in Chap. 1, the information and communication revolution beginning in the 1970s set the stage for the outsourcing of industrial jobs and a growth of high-skilled managerial and professional occupations within OECD countries (Boix, 2019). As of 2017, less than 10% of US workers are employed in manufacturing jobs (Nau, 2019, p. 378).[67] Meanwhile, more than two-thirds are employed in high-tech and service sectors such as retail, transportation, banking, data processing, software, finance, marketing, and other information-related activities (ibid).[68] This shift from the modern industrial economy to post-modern service sector economies coincided with a blurring of the traditional class divisions in the West. As Magone (2019, p. 98) observes, "Class voting [in Europe] has become much more complicated owing to the differentiation of the services sector."[69]

Amidst these historical developments, left-wing political groups in Europe and the USA have encountered several ideological challenges. Notably, the lack of freedom and spectacular downfall of the Soviet Union dealt a considerable blow to the popularity of socialist ideology as a cultural phenomenon. As Inglehart (2018, p. 32) mentions, after the fall of the Soviet Union, "faith in a Marxist belief system that once provided a sense of meaning and purpose to many people collapsed."

In *Capital and Ideology*, Piketty (2020) attributes the decline of the political left in Western Europe to the social democratic parties themselves as they gradually shifted from representing the working class and underrepresented groups in the 1950s and 1960s towards representing the highly educated by the 1990s and 2000s ("the Brahmin left"). Meanwhile, those with high incomes tend to vote for the center-right party ("the merchant right"). Thus, in the West, "it is clear that the whole system of 'classist' cleavages, together with the left-right political structure of the period 1950–1980, has gradually broken down" (ibid, p. 788).

Since the rise of neoliberalism, advocates of liberal capitalism have also been successful in weakening labor unions, further undermining socialist movement's potential. As Streeck (2017, p. 59) explains, "capitalism is disorganizing not only itself but its opposition as well, depriving it of the capacity either to defeat capitalism or to rescue it." Thus, it is not surprising that "Countervailing power [against monopoly capitalism] has all but disappeared in America" (Reich, 2015, p. 181).

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[67] According to Wetzel (2022, p. 19), the number of US workers employed in manufacturing barely declined from 17.3 million in 1970 to 17.2 million in 2000. However, during that time, the total number of workers employed in the US doubled, indicating that the share of workers employed in factory jobs declined. The domestic industrial economy in the US today consists primarily of "factory output, transportation of goods and people, creating structures such as bridges and buildings, and extractive industries such as mining and oil and gas fields" (ibid, pp. 16–17).

[68] Robert Inglehart (2018, p. 203) distinguishes between high- and low-technology services. High-tech services include information-based, professional, scientific, and technical ones, as well as finance and insurance sectors. Low-tech services include retail, fast food and dining, hospitality (lodging and entertainment), and perhaps automotive and home repair.

[69] Within this context, some autonomous Marxists have shifted their focus from "the working class" to the broader concept of "multitude" (Price, 2013, p. 162).

The Challenge of Partisan-Left Revolution Within the USA

With regard to US politics, rifts within the broader left-wing make it challenging to advance a partisan-left revolutionary strategy. In his book *Who Rules America?,* Domhoff (2006, pp. 214–5) identifies three broad coalitions in US politics: a corporate-conservative alliance on the right, a liberal-labor coalition in the center, and a socialist far-left.[70] Domhoff identifies three main disagreements preventing a broader liberal-labor-left coalition from forming in the USA:

1. *Economic program*: While they agree on reforms such as a higher minimum wage, employment, and social benefits, the camps divide over whether to improve capitalism or replace it with socialism.
2. *Insider* vs. *outsider tactics*: While the liberal-labor coalition wants to work within the Democratic Party, left-progressives and anti-capitalists aim to build an alternative party or to avoid party politics altogether.
3. *Militancy*: The liberal-labor coalition endorses only non-violent tactics and opposes some anti-capitalist tactics such as attacks on property.

These rifts within the broader left-wing of the US political spectrum stem not only from recent historical developments such as the rise of the post-modern economy but also from more deeply rooted aspects of American culture. Especially important in that regard is the shared belief in "social/economic mobility as manifested in the 'American Dream'" (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 348). The USA has long embraced the "land of opportunity" myth, which de-emphasizes class struggle (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004). This aspect of US culture is also indicative of its classical liberal "Lockean" characteristic.

Given the goal of defeating (rather than building bridges with) the other side, partisan revolutionary strategies deepen political polarization, reducing popular support for the movement. As a result, partisan-left strategies increase the likelihood of political violence during the revolution, as well as the need for state coercion to contain the (larger than necessary) opposition to the revolution after the transition. Such divisiveness is partly elite-driven. That is, partisan-left revolutionary strategies make it easier for political elites and media pundits to stoke fears about socialism and to vilify the revolutionary movement, accusing them of acting in bad faith. For example, Republican Party leaders accused Black Lives Matter protestors and anti-fascists of being "professional anarchists" supported by liberal elites such as Warren Buffett.[71] Despite the baselessness of the accusations, others on the right seem to

[70] Consistent with Domhoff's identification of a corporate-conservative alliance on the right, Wolin (2008, p. 223) observes that "capitalism and conservatism merged in the latter part of the twentieth century."

[71] Mohamed, T. (2021, June 13). *A Warren Buffett-owned company is battling wild conspiracies that it planted bricks for George Floyd protestors to hurl at police*. Business Insider. https://www.businessinsider.com/warren-buffett-acme-brick-battles-conspiracies-planted-supplied-protests-2020-6?op=1

adopt and propagate such messages, recognizing their value as divisive propaganda. Non-partisan coalitions and ideas, by contrast, neutralize such attacks.

Reason 2: Partisan-Left Strategy May Not Be Equal Liberty Maximizing

Of course, these practical challenges do not necessarily indicate that a partisan-left strategy is not the best way to pursue revolutionary change in the USA. If those on the left were the only ones with ethically and strategically sound ideas, it could be argued that it is the only morally permissible route to revolution (as daunting as that route might be).[72] For instance, from a class struggle perspective, because private property rights will tend toward a "dictatorship of capital," a partisan-left approach is the only possible path to a free and equal society.

One example of a partisan left-wing revolutionary approach is the libertarian socialist strategy described by Wetzel (2022) in his book *Overcoming Capitalism*. I see two basic differences between this book's libertarian social democracy strategy and the libertarian socialist strategy described by Wetzel. First, libertarian socialism's purely prefigurative (non-state) approach does not adequately address concerns about the potential for bad anarchy (see Chap. 2). Second, the libertarian socialist approach does not address valid concerns about private property rights (see Chap. 3). In sum, I would argue that libertarian social democracy's non-partisan revolutionary strategy has practical advantages (mitigating the aforementioned challenges associated with partisan-left approaches) and is ultimately more conducive to equal liberty.

Other Benefits of the Non-partisan Approach

Other benefits of a non-partisan approach have been recognized as well. One such argument is that non-partisan approaches make partisan co-optation less likely. Making a related point in *How Democracies Die*, Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018, p. 219) observe that, "whereas a narrow (urban, secular, progressive) anti-Trump coalition would reinforce the current axes of partisan division, a broader coalition would crosscut these axes and maybe even help dampen them." By contrast, partisan coalitions, by outflanking rather than cutting across the two-party system, are more easily coopted when the ideologically proximate major party wins an election.

Also relevant, both Reich (2015) and Inglehart (2018) argue that a broad-based coalition of the 99% will be needed to restrain the inequality of the new capitalist

[72] Signs of a reemerging working-class identity suggest potential for renewed partisan-left strategic momentum. According to Inglehart (2018, p. 196), "in 2000, 33% of the US public described themselves as 'working class'; by 2015, that figure had risen to 48%."

political economy.[73] Furthermore, in *The End of Protest*, Micah White (2016, p. 197) notes that non-partisan approaches promote idea sharing: "The rural populist strategy that I am proposing will require laying aside sectarian divisions between left and right. […] The left and right have a lot to learn from each other. In the United States, for example, the right has developed the constitutional arguments for secession that will be necessary in the long term. And the left has developed the authentic grassroots organizing style that genuine populists can get behind."

Coalition Participants: Civil Society and State Actors

Civil Society Groups

What Is Civil Society?

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines *civil society* as a "dense network of groups, communities, networks, and ties that stand between the individual and the modern state."[74] Given its non-state nature, "[c]ivil society is always a realm of prefiguration" (Condit, 2019, p. 196). Civil society organizations include labor unions, professional and producer associations, ethnonationalist and religious organizations, women's coalitions, human rights groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and transnational social movements and organizations (Haggard & Kaufman, 2016, p. 67). Because civil society encompasses the various non-state groups that participate in public affairs, it will inevitably play a crucial role in any revolutionary movement. For instance, Haggard and Kaufman (2016, p. 61) mention that "enduring [civil society] organizations play a crucial role in fomenting the mass protest that drives distributive conflict transitions." In what follows, I will discuss the potential roles of political parties, labor unions, and NGOs.

Political Parties

Political parties have some potential benefits when it comes to mobilizing mass movements (Haggard & Kaufman, 2016, p. 106). But which type of political parties might contribute to a libertarian revolutionary coalition? Marxists have traditionally advocated a strong role for a vanguard Communist Party in spearheading

[73] Reich (2015, p. 185) envisions a broad-based non-partisan coalition (i.e., a "countervailing power") as follows: "the bottom 90% of Americans – regardless of whether they are owners of small businesses or working poor, entrepreneurs or student debtors, small investors or homeowners, white or black or Latino, men or women – have far more in common economically than they do with the top executives of large corporations, the Wall Street crowd, or America's wealth."

[74] Kenny, M. (n.d.). *Civil society*. Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved August 24, 2021, from https://www.britannica.com/topic/civil-society

revolution. Libertarian socialists, meanwhile, have tended to reject such an approach. For example, Wetzel (2022, p. 204) asserts that "the aim is to socialize power, not put power into the hands of a political party." Of course, not all revolutionary parties are authoritarian in outlook (e.g., the Solidarity party in Poland, which contributed to the fall of the Soviet Union, was more libertarian in outlook). From the perspective of libertarian social democracy, a successful revolutionary movement in the USA would need to be broad-based and non-partisan in character. Such a coalition might include minor parties, socialists, progressives, independents, and libertarians, disaffected Democrats and Republicans, a variety of civil society groups, and the previously apolitical who are awakened and inspired by the revolutionary message and momentum.

Labor Unions and Working Class

Broadly defined, the working class constitutes a large majority of the population. According to Price (2013, pp. 121–2), the working class "includes anyone who must sell their labor power to live (or anyone who depends on those who must, such as their spouses or children), and who is not a supervisor." This includes skilled and unskilled workers in manufacturing and service jobs from all sectors of the economy. The working class also includes the unemployed, the families of workers, people on disability income, and retired people who did working-class jobs (Wetzel, 2022, pp. 9–10). Reagan (2021, Chap. 6) also underscores the broad base of the working class, arguing that effective revolutionary movements should be intersectional, including various sectors of the working class: the workers themselves, women, students, soldiers, and more.

Working class (labor) unions, including consciously libertarian anarcho-syndicalist unions and more mainstream "mass" labor unions, are key actors in the libertarian socialist strategy. Labor unions would play a key role in a nonpartisan libertarian social democratic approach as well (although they are less paramount in that vision). For instance, in their study of revolutionary transitions, Haggard and Kaufman find that labor unions "directly contributed to a more robust defense of political liberties, regardless of the transition path" (Haggard & Kaufman, 2016, p. 357). As with libertarian socialism, labor unions could also play a key role in expropriating certain industries in a libertarian social democratic strategy (although, given the latter's recognition of private property rights, this would be less total than in the libertarian socialist vision).

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Individuals

There are various other types of civil society groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that might contribute to a revolutionary effort. For example, during the fall of the Soviet Union, civil society networks such as oppositional leadership groups, think tanks, civic educators, student movements, party coalitions, and

election monitoring groups "provided the underpinnings of mass mobilization" (Haggard & Kaufman, 2016, p. 199). Emphasizing the role of students and the well educated, Guriev and Treisman (2022, p. 27) argue that the protection of democracy comes not from democratic institutions per se but rather from "the active resistance of the informed."

Some activists might also be part of transnational (rather than purely domestic) groups. As Wetzel (2022, p. 184) observes, "An internationalist orientation favors the development of [transnational] links among grassroots unions and community organizations." Also relevant, according to Guriev and Treisman (2022, p. 204), autocrats today "face greater pushback than before from a ramifying international network of activists and lawyers, backed up by global public opinion." Of course, non-affiliated individuals, neighbors, family members, friends, coworkers, and others can also potentially contribute to movements for greater democracy.

Role for State Actors?

Would there be any role for state actors in a revolutionary movement? I have argued that a revolutionary movement should reject efforts at elite cooptation and "pacted" (or negotiated) transitions that allow the incumbent elites to remain in power. Thus, I would exclude elected representatives from such a movement. As will be discussed below, basic public services would ideally continue to function during a revolutionary upheaval. In that sense, public service personnel might participate in the revolutionary effort. Finally, there is the question about the role of the military in a revolution, which will also be discussed below.

Coalition Participants and Ideology: The Inclusivity-Cohesion Tradeoff

The Tradeoff

There is a certain tradeoff between building a broad-based revolutionary coalition (participant inclusivity) and coordinating around shared objectives (ideological cohesion) (Lawson, 2019, p. 218). Many contemporary revolutionary movements seem to favor participant inclusivity over ideological cohesion. For instance, Lawson (2019, p. 233) refers to "a smorgasbord of contemporary ills" that motivate revolutionary movements today: globalization, neoliberalism, austerity, environmental degradation, inequality, racism, sexism, injustice, neo-imperialism, militarism, and more. How should revolutionary movements balance inclusivity and cohesion? As will be discussed next, the partisan-left libertarian socialist approach favors cohesion over inclusivity, while the non-partisan libertarian social democratic approach (this book's argument) favors inclusivity over cohesion.

Cohesion Within the Libertarian Socialist (Partisan-Left) Coalition

In the libertarian socialist strategy, the primary source of ideological cohesion is libertarian socialism and worker solidarity. The key actors in that strategy are the working-class majority (the masses), as well as more consciously libertarian anarcho-syndicalist unions. With this strategy, sometimes called a dual organizationalist approach, libertarian socialist organizations are also active in mass organizations such as labor unions and community associations (Price, 2013, p. 168). Wetzel (2022, p. 203) supports dual organizing on the grounds that the smaller libertarian groups can engage in useful activities such as popular education through publications, conferences, and working-class centers (used for workshops and self-education like the Spanish storefront schools of the 1930s).

Cohesion Within the Libertarian Social Democratic (Non-partisan) Coalition

In the libertarian social democratic strategy, the primary source of ideological cohesion would be the political, economic, and cultural objectives described in Part I of this book.[75] One of the downsides of building a broad-based, non-partisan coalition is that it can dilute the commitment of the movement to freedom and equality. For example, in Chile, the two-seat-district electoral system "favored the creation of umbrella coalitions that incentivized the left to partner with centrist political parties, leading to the adulteration of their egalitarian political agenda" (Albertus & Menaldo, 2018, p. 93). However, in the libertarian social democracy vision, a non-partisan coalition would not dilute the movement's goals, as the goals themselves are non-partisan: proportional representation and a multiparty system (political realm), a libertarian-mixed economy (economic realm), and a new paradigm blending elements of the progressive and libertarian traditions (cultural realm).

With regard to key actors, like libertarian socialism, libertarian social democracy would include the working class (broadly defined) in a revolutionary coalition. However, such a coalition might also include some groups excluded from the partisan-left libertarian socialist coalition. As will be discussed below, although ethical boundaries would substantially narrow the list of acceptable participants in a non-partisan coalition, some "petit bourgeoisie," small business owners, and/or proponents of economic liberalism (e.g., market anarchists, mutualists, libertarian-minded Republicans) might also contribute to a non-partisan revolutionary movement.

According to Wetzel (2022, p. 76), "Building solidarity among a large and diverse group of people requires building mutual support across their differences." I

[75] Consistent with this idea of revolutionary goals (rather than a centralized revolutionary party) facilitating revolutionary movement coordination, Eckstrand (2022, p. 189) writes: "The most effective network is one that is itself centered around an ideal or a goal, but in which no part of the network is itself the center."

agree, but I would extend this logic beyond the working class as well. Of course, not all of those within the working class hold left-wing views (especially within the USA), making the partisan-left strategy more challenging (Price, 2013, p. 119).[76] From the libertarian social democracy perspective, working-class solidarity increases the likelihood of revolutionary success and is thus crucial. However, unlike libertarian socialism, the success of libertarian social democracy does not require that the revolutionary coalition be overwhelmingly left-wing.

Revolutionary Organization: A Decentralized Approach

Revolutionary Vanguard Party?

Organization can be understood simply as a social movement's capacity for strategy (see Przeworski, 2019, pp. 150–1). Thus, some organization will be needed to achieve a successful revolutionary outcome. But how decentralized should such a movement be? Karl Marx was a strong supporter of a centralized, party-based strategy. For instance, Marx agreed with a proposal at the 1871 London Conference of the International Workingmen's Association stating: "the working class cannot act as a class except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from, and opposed to all other political parties" (quoted in Wetzel, 2022, p. 160).

By contrast, libertarian socialists have generally opposed the idea of a revolutionary vanguard party. For example, at the first International Workingmen's Association, Bakunin "argued that Marx was wrong to call for the organization of political parties as a means of realizing revolution" (Kinna, 2019, p. 15). More recently, arguing against a Leninist vanguard party, Reagan (2021, p. 168) emphasizes that "there can be no singular set of interests of 'the' working class. […] Instead, our movements need a collective composition that reflects and respects this diversity [workers, women, students, soldiers, or others]." Libertarian social democracy is also opposed to vanguard party-led strategies, given the authoritarian tendencies of the latter, as well as the advantages of decentralized organization, which I turn to next.

Advantages of a Decentralized Organizational Approach

In the current context, a decentralized ("bottom-up") coalition would have three advantages over more centralized types of organizations: resilience, horizontalism, and pluralism. With regard to *resiliency*, a decentralized movement would not be as easily undermined by "entryists" (i.e., infiltrators) or co-opted by the major parties

[76] One could argue that a critical mass of working-class individuals could *become* left-wing with successful revolutionary organizing and education. However, I would argue that this goal sets the bar unnecessarily high for revolutionary success, at least in the USA.

as it gains momentum. With regard to *horizontalism*, a decentralized movement would be less susceptible to the hierarchical tendencies of revolutionary party organizations such as the Revolutionary Communist Party.[77] With regard to *pluralism*, a decentralized movement would be more pluralistic and thus avoid "crowding out [the variety of] goals that must be attended to if the system is to be sustainable" (Streeck, 2017, p. 60).

While obtaining these advantages of decentralized organization, the movement would also be organized enough to provide mutual aid and facilitate coordination among its participants. With regard to *mutual aid*, with some degree of organization, participants may find it easier to offer various types of support to each other. For instance, "[Malatesta] argued that the rejection of public organization to avoid police persecution actually made it easier for the authorities to suppress the anarchist movement, by isolating anarchists and cutting them off from broader public support" (Graham, 2015, p. 257).

With regard to *coordination*, in addition to the shared goals of the movement, a revolutionary organization can provide a focal point to harmonize the various movement participants working together in pursuit of revolutionary objectives. The autonomous zone of Cherán, Mexico, provides one example of coordination without political parties, in that case relying on bonfires as well as neighborhood and community assemblies (Campbell, 2020). Also, Swann describes a cybernetic organizational form (found in Occupy Wall Street, for example), which is non-hierarchical and yet includes a system to facilitate coordination among member units. The central challenge, Swann adds, is to "ensure that the functional hierarchy of roles does not become ossified in a structural hierarchy but that it remains open to democratic participation."[78]

International Allies

According to Lawson (2019, p. 35), "Revolutions are always international events." How might international relations be relevant to a revolution within the USA? Political science research has found that international actors can pressure political

[77] Consistent with that observation, according to Alpa Shah (2021, p. 4), the struggles of Marxist-Leninist Maoist revolutionaries "take place through a party organized by extreme political hierarchy that suppresses individuality." In the USA, for example, the Revolutionary Communist Party aims to establish a one-party system. This is suggested, for instance, by the following rule from the Preamble to their draft US Constitution: "[T]he Revolutionary Communist Party provides leadership to the state and its key institutions." Avakian, B. (2010). *Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America*. Revolutionary Communist Party. Retrieved August 24, 2021, from https://www.revcom.us/socialistconstitution/SocialistConstitution-en.pdf

[78] Swann, T. (2020, May 15). *The Anarchist Cybernetics of Mutual Aid. Self-Organisation in and Beyond the Coronavirus*. Anarchist Studies. https://anarchiststudies.noblogs.org/article-the-anarchist-cybernetics-of-mutual-aid-self-organisation-in-and-beyond-the-coronavirus-crisis/

elites to support (or at least not block) democratizing reforms. The two primary mechanisms by which international actors can pressure political elites in this regard are *leverage* – international actions that directly induce incumbents to reform or step aside – and *linkage* – political and economic ties that operate on leader incentives indirectly (Haggard & Kaufman, 2016, p. 144). Haggard and Kaufman (2016, p. 323) also refer to "neighborhood effects" – the influence that neighboring regimes can have on a country's revolutionary transition success.

In the case of the USA, other democracies might also help to ensure that the USA will become more democratic rather than less democratic after the revolution. Although revolutionary change in the USA is likely to be driven more by bottom-up domestic forces than by international pressures, international actors such as transnational activist groups, NGOs, and other democratic regimes could conceivably use both leverage and linkage to assist in the transition. Such international allies will also be crucial for achieving legitimacy for the new government on the international stage after the revolution.

8.6 Revolutionary Tactics

Tactical Pluralism

While it is at least theoretically possible to build consensus on the broad outlines of a revolutionary strategy (e.g., by favoring a non-partisan approach), revolutionary tactics are necessarily more context-specific and diverse. Many on the left appear to agree with this. For instance, Brett O'Shea reminds us that "a one size fits all approach to revolutionary movements is just untenable. You have to take account of the material conditions on the ground."[79] In a similar vein, Dirik (2020, p. 228) writes, "liberationist endeavors cannot be preplanned, fully organized to the last detail. Rather, most of the issues that need to be addressed come about during periods of struggle and experimentation." Emphasizing the benefits of tactical diversity, Micah White (2016, p. 223) argues that we ought to "take freely from any tactic that has ever worked in all of history. Moreover, we mash up and mutate these tactics in unpredictable ways." In a similar vein, Eckstrand (2022, p. 190) asserts that "resistance itself must become a site of creative struggle."[80]

[79] O'Shea, B. (2017, June 8). *Anarchism: Philosophy and History (with Dr. Mark Bray)*. Revolutionary Left Radio. http://revolutionaryleftradio.libsyn.com/website/anarchism-philosophy-and-history-with-dr-mark-bray

[80] On the other hand, we need not be completely agnostic when it comes to general tactical prescriptions. For instance, Reagan (2021) argues that worker strikes are the most effective form of direct action. For example, strikes were decisive in allowing the Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt to topple their dictators (ibid, p. 151). Reagan argues that potentially effective movements start with a strike in one sector of the working class (e.g., students), then spread into a gen-

There are numerous tactics that advocates of revolution might deploy. For instance, Lawson (2019, p. 218) mentions a variety of ways revolutionary messages have been spread, including "social technologies" such as "pamphlets, banners, songs, cartoons, graffiti, and posters," and mediums "from salons to taverns, and from ships to public squares," using "words, slogans, visual cues, [and] song." Haggard and Kaufman (2016, p. 69) list some types of revolutionary actions by civil society such as pressuring authoritarian incumbents, redefining existing circumstances as unjust, connecting grievances to the political order itself, and advocating plausible systemic alternatives. In the following discussion, I will consider three types of tactics reflecting different levels of risk: electoral boycott (low risk), independent assemblies (medium risk), and militant actions (high risk).

Micah White (2016, pp. 236–7) discusses a "voluntarist's ladder of engagement," according to which "there is a series of rungs leading from the most insignificant actions to the most revolutionary." While I would generally agree that "the goal of organizers is to lead people upward through these escalating rungs" (ibid), encouraging people to choose a rung with which they are comfortable, given their level of risk aversion (recall the discussion of "revolutionary thresholds" in Chap. 5), would help to maximize overall participation levels. I will also provide a brief discussion about ways to limit the "care gap" during a revolutionary transition.

Electoral Boycott (Low Risk)

Abstention: A "Non-tactic"

While revolutionary tactics are, on average, riskier (for the acting individual) than reformist tactics, both types can be thought of as normally distributed from low to high risk. One example of a low-risk revolutionary tactic is "the creation and dissemination of propaganda [which] gives those lacking the constitution to fight yet sympathetic with the cause something to do" (Eckstrand, 2022, p. 183). Another low-risk strategy, which I will focus on here, is to simply abstain from vote casting and perhaps try to persuade others to do the same. Although abstaining is a "non-tactic," Tim Horras reminds us that "most of the time pursuing a strategy means making decisions about what *not* to do."[81] As was emphasized previously in this chapter, electoral participation confers legitimacy on the political system, thus stabilizing it and perpetuating its various injustices (Laursen, 2021, pp. 162–3).

Electoral abstention is often promoted by anarchist groups. For instance, some argued against participating in the 2019 general election contest in Britain between

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eral strike including other sectors, potentially leading to the establishment of alternative direct democratic institutions, dual power, and liberation (ibid, Chap. 6).

[81] Horras, T. (2018, May 15). *"Wild, Unprecedented" Reformism: The Case of Larry Krasner*. Black Rose Federation. https://blackrosefed.org/reformism-larry-krasner/

Labour's Jeremy Corbyn and the Conservative Boris Johnson.[82] A critic of abstentionism might argue that it inadvertently serves the interests of reactionaries who wish to limit people's (especially Democrats) right to vote. However, two key differences between abstentionism, as advocated here, and the right-wing effort to limit the right to vote are the objectives of abstentionism (to promote a social revolution) and who should abstain (everyone, rather than just Democrats).

Arguments Against Electoral Abstentionism and Counter-arguments

Radicals and progressives often disagree on the question of whether it is better to cast a ballot or abstain. For instance, Sheldon Wolin (2008, pp. 205, 239) argued that the demobilization of the electorate is beneficial to elites, and that "Empire prefers a passive but patriotic subject." Some might also be concerned that, just as voting for a minor party candidate can have a "spoiler effect," so too might abstaining from the election help the less preferred major party candidate win. For example, according to Maia Ramnath, voting against Trump in 2020 in New York City "felt like forming a provisional united front among radicals, progressives, leftists, and liberals in the face of rising fascism, as was experienced in the 1930s and 1940s" (Laursen, 2021, pp. 5–6).

One response is the argument that as democracy becomes increasingly unequal, so too should electoral and policy concessions become increasingly independent of each other (see discussion in Chap. 5). That is, in an unequal democracy, policy concessions will be advanced by elites as needed to maintain stability, regardless of which party is in power. As Howard Zinn once wrote, "the really critical thing isn't who is sitting in the White House, but who is sitting in the streets."[83] In other words, there can't be a "spoiler effect" if politics doesn't really matter in the conventional sense.

We can also question whether abstaining even has a partisan impact on election outcomes. On the one hand, Ruy Teixeira (1992, p. 104) argues that "nonvoting does not as a rule make much of a difference to election outcomes." A more recent comprehensive study of non-voters by The Knight Foundation concluded, "If they all voted in 2020, non-voters would add an almost equal share of votes to Democratic and Republican candidates."[84] Other scholars have observed plausibly that "Democratic bias among non-participants has declined since the 1960s as class divisions have also declined" (James, 2012, p. 52).

On the other hand, consistent with concerns about a spoiler effect, some studies have found that non-voting harms the Democratic Party (Burden et al., 2017) and

[82] Revolution Nowhere. (2019, November 18). *Should Revolutionaries Back Corbyn? The case against* [Video]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKo9Y8gf6ik

[83] Zinn, H. (2011, October 28). *Shay's Rebellion Without the Guns*. Socialist Worker. https://socialistworker.org/blog/critical-reading/2011/10/28/shays%E2%80%99-rebellion-without-guns

[84] Knight Foundation. (2020). *The Untold Story of American Non-Voters*. Retrieved May 19, 2020, from https://the100million.org

reduces ethnic minority representation (Hajnal & Trounstine, 2005). Most empirical studies on the USA and other countries have found that increased voter turnout either contributes to left-leaning party election success or has a null effect on election outcomes (James, 2012, pp. 51–3). Thus, the weight of the evidence seems to suggest that higher turnout benefits left-leaning parties. Moreover, this impact is likely to be magnified in countries such as the USA with plurality elections and a two-party system (ibid, p. 59).

Furthermore, one might argue that voter participation increases democratic responsiveness. For instance, according to Boix (2019, p. 196), "a growing literature shows that a low participation rate among low-income voters results in lower taxes and less generous social services." However, I would attribute this pattern not to voter abstention but rather to the failure to adopt a more comprehensive revolutionary strategy. On the one hand, if people on the left abstain, elites cannot use electoral concessions to coopt that movement (since electoral concessions rely on influencing people's votes; see Chap. 5). As a result, more right-wing candidates would win, potentially resulting in more regressive policies. On the other hand, if the left adopts a more comprehensive revolutionary strategy (including but not limited to abstaining), the major policy concessions won (even from right-wing governments in response to such pressures) would likely outweigh the concessions gained from left-leaning governments relying solely on electoral reformism.[85]

If one still suspects that abstaining could have a spoiler effect and/or that this matters politically, they could also turn Sam Husseini's *Vote Pact* idea on its head and forge an *Abstention Pact* with someone from the opposite party. That is, rather than agreeing with someone on the opposite side of the political spectrum to vote for each one's preferred minor party candidate, each could agree not to cast a ballot at all. Like the *Vote Pact*, an *Abstention Pact* would neutralize any spoiler effect and create opportunities to discuss the revolutionary cause to boot.

Electoral abstention is often interpreted as a sign of apathy, even though "people in the most established democracies may simply be disaffected from their political institutions" (Ansell & Torfing, 2021, p. 165). Thus, finding opportunities to discuss why one is abstaining also seems important. For instance, one potential argument for abstention is that it can break the status quo mindset described by Przeworski (2019, p. 163): "Elections are the siren of democracy. They incessantly rekindle our

[85] In response to this argument, one concern might be that right-wing governments are more likely to be regime hardliners, repressing the revolutionary movement forcefully rather than granting concessions. I would emphasize a few points in response. First, I have argued that as a democracy becomes more unequal, so too will the actual differences (i.e., "behind the scenery" of partisan polarization) between right- and left-wing governments diminish. From that perspective, under revolutionary pressure, partisan governments from either camp will be similarly inclined to either repress or liberalize. Second, given the regime's reliance on democratic legitimacy, governments from either major party will be less likely to violently repress a non-violent revolutionary movement. Third, to the extent that the revolutionary movement succeeds in building a broad-based non-partisan coalition, violent repression from state security and/or right-wing forces will be less likely.

hopes. We are repeatedly eager to be lured by promises, to put our stakes on electoral bets. Hence, we obey and wait."

Independent Assemblies (Medium Risk)

The Potential of Independent Assemblies

As a "non-tactic," electoral abstention is low-risk and can potentially help build revolutionary momentum. However, on its own, abstention cannot bring about revolutionary change. Abstention is better thought of as fuel for more proactive revolutionary tactics. A more proactive idea is to organize independent assemblies where deliberation over a new US Constitution and other revolutionary topics can take place. According to Wetzel (2022, pp. 205–6) the aim of assembly democracy "is to have a free discussion where people have a fair opportunity to speak and make decisions in a timely and transparent manner [allowing us to] hear what our coworkers think in order to arrive at a collective decision."

Paul Street suggests, "Serious advocates of popular sovereignty should call for – imagine – a constituent assembly dedicated to making a new governing charter that would build and empower popular democracy, not checkmate it."[86] Article V of the US Constitution provides two ways to propose constitutional amendments: a constitutional convention or via two-thirds vote in the US House of Representatives and Senate. After which, such an amendment must be approved by three-fourths (currently 38) of the States. The constitutional convention has never been used to propose a constitutional amendment at the federal level, although more than 230 such conventions have been assembled at the State level.[87] Two main problems arise with such an approach. First, because it is reformist in nature (that is, taking the establishment path toward institutional change), it requires bargaining with the current political elites, which would dilute the magnitude of any changes advanced (if they could be advanced at all).[88] Second, as I have argued, it makes more sense to aim for an entirely new US constitution at this point in history, rather than mere amendments.

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[86] Street, P. (2017, June 11). *Impeach the U.S. Constitution*. Truth Dig. https://www.truthdig.com/articles/impeach-the-u-s-constitution-2/

[87] Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Convention to propose amendments to the United States Constitution*. Retrieved July 10, 2022, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convention_to_propose_amendments_to_the_United_States_Constitution

[88] During a genuine revolutionary movement, delegates would need to be selected as the independent assemblies built consensus on a new social contract from the bottom up. According to Wetzel (2022, p. 391), delegate democracy (in contrast to representative democracy) has the following characteristics: delegates are drawn from the ranks of the working class and are subject to removal any time; they are required to report back to the local assemblies regularly; and the local assemblies can overrule delegate decisions via a local referendum. To help avoid the formation of a new elite, delegates might also be selected by lot.

In addition to providing a forum for constitutional deliberation, history shows that independent assemblies can spark revolutionary upheaval. For instance, the French Revolution was catalyzed after King Louis XVI tried to suppress the newly established Republican National Assembly in 1789. During the American Revolution, the Continental Congress was established as an alternative to the British Parliament and provided a source of legitimacy for the Revolutionary Army as they fought the British government. In 1841, lawmaker Thomas Wilson Dorr convened an illegal Rhode Island constitutional convention to replace the state's colonial charter with a more modern and progressive constitution. Dorr was subsequently arrested by the governor and tried for treason, sparking "Dorr's Rebellion." Although the rebellion failed, the state legislature soon adopted a more progressive constitution (Smith & Greenblatt, 2014, p. 68). As another example, just prior to the opening session of the French National Assembly in May 1848, P.J. Proudhon called upon workers to create their own assembly in opposition (Graham, 2015, p. 37). What follows are five suggested guidelines for independent assembly effectiveness in the current context.[89]

Guidelines for Assembly Effectiveness

Ethical Boundaries on Inclusivity

As was argued above, a revolutionary coalition would need to be broad-based and non-partisan in character to succeed in the USA. One challenge to that goal is polarization driven by bad-faith politics on the right. New York Times columnist Paul Krugman (2020, p. 297) refers to a "bothsidesism" fallacy among those who "either don't recognize or refuse to acknowledge the fundamental asymmetry between the parties." According to Krugman (2020, p. 3), "given the realities of money and power, in modern America most of the politicization of everything reflects pressure from the right." For instance, "[global warming] deniers are clearly arguing in bad faith. They don't really believe what they are saying" (ibid, p. 331).

Another challenge to broad coalition building is the need to keep out various forms of discrimination, again, mostly coming from the political right. According to Krugman (2020, p. 309), "As Democrats became the party of civil rights, the G.O.P. could attract working-class whites by catering to their social and racial illiberalism, even while pursuing policies that hurt ordinary workers." Furthermore, according to Krugman, "study after study has found that racial resentment, not economic distress, drove Trump voters" (ibid, p. 360) and that today "There's a substantial bloc of racist-populist voters" (ibid, p. 310). For instance, some members of the Tea Party Patriots movement "hurled racial epithets at Democratic members of Congress on the eve of the [Affordable Care Act] vote" (ibid, p. 54). Also, a 2012

[89] In addition to independent assemblies at the neighborhood (or higher) level, which I discuss here, other types of independent deliberative bodies include worker councils and industrial self-management organizations (Wetzel, 2022, p. 205).

survey of the Tea Party movement found that "more than 80% said they were 'anxious' or 'fearful' of immigrants who came to the country without legal authority" (Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 136).

While ethical boundaries on authoritarianism and discrimination would certainly narrow the list of acceptable right-leaning participants and/or messages in the independent assemblies, there may be some within the broader camp of economic liberalism (market anarchists, mutualists, perhaps some libertarian-minded Republicans, and small business owners) who are guided by a good-faith desire to achieve equal liberty, including opposition to class hierarchy and, to varying degrees, the other forms of domination (see discussion of intersectionality in Chap. 4).

Collective Decision-Making

In *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls (1971, p. 311) writes, "In the constitutional convention the aim of the parties is to find among the just constitutions (i.e., those satisfying the principle of equal liberty) the one most likely to lead to just and effective legislation in view of the general facts about the society in question." Even if unanimity is not achieved over such matters, "What is essential is that when persons with different convictions make conflicting demands on the basic structure as a matter of political principle, they are to judge these claims by the principles of justice" (ibid, p. 194).

In *The Idea of Justice*, Amartya Sen (2009, p. 135) explains, "There will, of course, be considerable divergence between different impartial views – from far as well as near." Furthermore, "the agreements arrived at need not demand that some proposal is uniquely just, but perhaps only that it is plausibly just, or at least not manifestly unjust." Sen also refers to "the acceptance of an unresolvable diversity of views," which comes after an exhaustive attempt to build consensus (p. 397). As was emphasized in Chaps. 2 and 4, in some cases, a single unitary decision may be needed from an assembly, in which case unanimity is ideal but would not necessarily be required to maximize equal liberty.

Consensual decision-making processes have been used by New Left groups in the 1960s (e.g., the Movement for a New Society, founded by Quaker pacifists), Food Not Bombs chapters in the 1980s, opponents of the 2003 Iraq war such as Direct Action to Stop the War, as well as Occupy Wall Street in 2011 (Wetzel, 2022, p. 208). One potential problem with such consensus decision-making processes is that, because it takes longer to build consensus, such processes favor those with shorter work hours or more flexible schedules (and thus more time to participate), such as students (ibid).

Thus, while striving for consensus, assemblies might adopt a simple- or supermajority decision rule (depending on the type of question) to empower the majority of good-faith participants over any bad-faith minority and to expedite the deliberative process (allowing those with less time to participate). For example, libertarian

syndicalist unions have favored majority voting rules (Wetzel, 2022, p. 209).[90] The system of hand gestures used to communicate in the Occupy Wall Street general assemblies in 2011 might also prove useful, at least at the local level. More generally, according to Kinna, Prichard, and Swann (2019), the Occupy Wall Street movement offered a model for post-state constitutional politics including (i) declarative principles, (ii) institutions, (iii) decision-making procedures, and (iv) formal and informal camp rules.

Balancing Inclusivity and Vetting

Independent assembly participants would need to strike a balance between, on the one hand, remaining vigilant against potential bad-faith actors while, on the other hand, remaining inclusive and being careful to avoid unfair accusations or suspicions. Two benefits of including participants from other communities are (i) objective input from disinterested actors and groups (i.e., those from other regions) and (ii) promoting federal integration of the various assemblies (Sen, 2009, p. 128).

On the other hand, Micah White (2016, pp. 112–3) recalls that because "Occupy never developed a way to vet participants," this led to an "uncritical openness [which] was Occupy's downfall: the general assemblies were paralyzed by the inability to distinguish between true and false." However, White (2016, p. 248) observes that vetting is challenging: "When it comes to revolutionary activism, it can be very difficult to distinguish light from night, newcomers from entryists – forces that enter movements to control them from the inside – and friend from front group."[91]

This challenge can become even more acute as the movement expands. Micah White (2016, p. 125) notes that, initially, at the Occupy gathering at Zuccotti Park in New York City, "only true believers were present in the early planning meetings. The other forces that always seem to derail things – sectarians, agents provocateurs, corporatists and activists stuck in old habits – weren't there because they assumed the action would be a flop." What are the appropriate assembly rules or guidelines needed to properly balance inclusivity and vetting? How might that balance be recalibrated as the movement expands? Each assembly would need to design rules that allow its participants to properly strike that balance.

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[90] Discussing the topic of consensus decision-making, Raekstad and Gradin (2020, p. 65) note that, "In practice, some forms of super-majority (e.g., 90%) are sometimes labelled 'consensus', and many groups who practice consensus decision-making include fall-back options to different kinds of majority voting when a consensus decision can't be reached (with differences in how soon, how readily, and how willingly they resort to this)."

[91] An early example of suspicions of bad faith is found at the First International Workingmen's Association, where the two sides – Bakunin and the anarchists vs. Marx and Engels – were "driven by the fear that the other represented a secretive authoritarian sect trying to take over the International for their own nefarious purposes" (Raekstad & Gradin, 2020, p. 64).

Assembly Security and Vigilance

Independent assemblies involve counter-hegemonic organizing which, in turn, can pose a threat to the existing regime (Przeworski, 1991, pp. 54–5). Thus, such assemblies are likely to provoke reactions, even in a democracy, especially if such assemblies proliferate and begin to coalesce at larger scales. (We saw this during the Occupy Wall Street uprising in 2011, for example.) There is thus a need for security guards to watch for violent attacks from authoritarian reactionaries, MAGA vigilantes (i.e., far-right Trump supporters), or others and to deescalate tensions that might arise among participants. If such assemblies are disrupted by the police, an effective response might be something like Gandhian civil disobedience (for those able to risk arrest).

Commitment to Revolutionary Strategy

Finally, a shared commitment to revolutionary strategy would render assembly participants more immune to elite cooptation. Such a commitment is crucial, as supporters of the two-party system (e.g., members of the Democratic Party) or those who continue to view electoral politics as a necessary evil (e.g., Bernie Sanders supporters) may attempt to divert assembly participants' energy and attention back toward reformism. Such a distraction would be tempting, as the mainstream media would continue to focus on politics as usual (i.e., two-party system electoral campaigns and candidates) while ignoring the revolutionary uprising. However, imbued with a shared commitment to revolutionary strategy and an elite theoretic understanding of US politics, assembly participants would be less susceptible to such distractions. Eventually the media might begin to report on the assemblies, helping the movement to gain additional momentum by creating what game theorists call "common knowledge": public awareness about the public's collective awareness (Guriev & Treisman, 2022, p. 92).

Militant Action (High Risk)

Seizing National Power

At some point, a successful revolutionary movement will need to seize power (if needed to maximize equal liberty), which may entail more risky actions associated with the revolutionary upheaval. Thus, another topic for discussion at the revolutionary assemblies might concern the sites of national power that might be seized and occupied by revolutionary groups.[92] How might such an event unfold? Albertus

[92] An iconic historic example was during the French Revolution, when, on July 14, 1789, revolutionary insurgents stormed and seized control of the medieval armory, fortress, and political prison

and Menaldo (2018, p. 50) describe a revolutionary path to egalitarian democracy (similar to the "one big event" perspective mentioned above) as follows:

> In some cases, authoritarian political incumbents and their economic allies are entirely steamrolled as the masses and outsider elites coordinate to bring daily life to a standstill and strip state assets and perhaps even physically overrun major political offices and businesses. A revolution that successfully establishes democracy presents the masses and the outsider economic elites who help bank-roll the revolution with a blank slate, which they can use to codify a new democratic constitution and banish the influence of the former authoritarian regime.[93]

The level of risk involved at various stages of the revolution will depend, crucially, on two factors: (i) how effective the revolutionary movement is at building a broad-based non-partisan coalition (e.g., to neutralize elite divide-and-conquer tactics) and (ii) how each individual actually contributes to the movement at any given moment. There are a variety of tactics, ranging from low to high risk, available throughout the various stages of revolutionary change, including during the culminating "one big event" where power is seized (if necessary to maximize equal liberty).

Prospects for a Non-violent Revolution

High-risk actions can come in many forms. For instance, Wolin (2008, p. 254) refers to the "fugitive democracy" of the American revolutionaries who undertook various informal, improvised, and spontaneous actions: "demonstrations, protest meetings, petitions, tarring and feathering of royal officials, burning of effigies, destruction of official residencies, and storming jails to free one of their own." In *The Conquest of Bread*, Peter Kropotkin (2015 [1892], p. 86) asserted that "every revolution means a certain disturbance to everyday life, and those who expect this tremendous climb out of the old grooves to be accomplished without so much as jarring the dishes on their dinner tables will find themselves mistaken."

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known as the Bastille. In the USA today, the more obvious potential sites for the seizure of power include the major branches of government, such as the US Congress. However, there are other, less visible sites that might also be considered, such as the federal government's fusion centers. Initially created after September 11, 2001, as a means of sharing counterterrorism intelligence among state and local governments, these centers (eighty total across the country) have also been used to illegally collect and share information about US citizens not suspected of criminal activity. German, M. (2022, December 15). *How Government Fusion Centers Violate Americans' Rights – and How to Stop It*. Brennan Center for Justice. https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/how-government-fusion-centers-violate-americans-rights-and-how-stop-it

[93] Albertus and Menaldo (2018) argue that, given their collective action problems, mass movement success depends on support from outsider economic elites. Insider economic elites enjoy privileged relationships with political elites and thus benefit from the status quo. By contrast, outsider economic elites lack such connections and stand to gain from a revolutionary transformation of society.

That said, how forceful or militant would a revolutionary movement in the USA need to be to succeed? If recent history is any example, not very. None of the recent "third waves" of democratic revolutions – e.g., the Fall of the Soviet Union – led to protracted civil war or armed conflict. As Przeworski (1991, p. 5) observes, "except in Romania and in the nationalistic flare-ups in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, not a single person was killed in this revolution." According to Jack Goldstone (2014, p. 133), "If the trends of the last 30 years continue, [revolutionary movements] will increasingly [pursue revolution] by nonviolent resistance." Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, "unarmed protests have become the preeminent form of revolutionary mobilization" (Lawson, 2019, p. 38).[94]

Of course, the "third wave" involved transitions from authoritarian to democratic regimes. By contrast, this book focuses on revolutionary transformation from liberal to egalitarian democracy. However, such transitions would seem *even less* violence-prone, given the human rights protections enshrined in democratic constitutions, as well as the democratic regime's greater reliance on legitimacy (rather than coercion) to maintain stability. Of course, even those mechanisms might fail to limit repression if elites are faced with a credible revolutionary threat.[95]

Brett O'Shea has noted that "armed revolution in the US […] would probably descend into civil war. The state and far-right would team up to crush any attempts from leftists to revolt."[96] However, a broad-based, non-partisan revolutionary coalition would include groups and individuals from across the political spectrum (within the aforementioned ethical boundaries), ensuring that the primary division is between the establishment and libertarian camps rather than between the left and right wings. The more this cross-cutting cleavage (between establishmentarian and libertarian camps) prevails, the less likely violence will be and the greater the likelihood of revolutionary success.

[94] In his book *Anatomies of Revolution*, Lawson (2019, pp. 202–4) describes a new era of "negotiated revolutions," which began with the 1989 revolution in the Soviet Union. A libertarian social democratic revolution in the US would bear some similarities as well as some differences from this revolutionary model. Similarities include the revolutionary movement's non-hierarchical organizational form, broad-based inclusivity, and reliance on non-violent tactics. However, a libertarian social democratic movement would have clearer revolutionary goals and would avoid a negotiated or "pacted" transition (to minimize elite cooptation).

[95] Making a similar point about more authoritarian regimes, Guriev and Treisman (2022, p. 15) note that "Spin dictators may end up repressing as a last resort, reverting to the old-school approach in extremis. But that means giving up on broad popularity."

[96] O'Shea, B. (2017, June 8). *Anarchism: Philosophy and History (with Dr. Mark Bray)*. Revolutionary Left Radio. http://revolutionaryleftradio.libsyn.com/website/anarchism-philosophy-and-history-with-dr-mark-bray

When Might Militant Actions Be Justified?

Uri Gordon (2008, p. 87) argues plausibly that violent actions (defined as "an attack or as deliberate endangerment") should be kept to a minimum as a social movement tactic. On the other hand, "Resorting to violence is a precarious tactic, but to renounce it altogether may end only in submission to coercive hierarchies" (Condit, 2019, p. 154). When might more militant tactics be justified? In his book *Guns Across America*, political scientist Robert Spitzer (2015, pp. 11–12), addressing the argument that gun rights are essential for preventing tyranny, asks if an armed revolt might be "a remedy that would prove worse than the ill it was designed to address?" I will suggest two general guidelines for evaluating militant actions: Is the use of force justified, and is it likely to be effective?[97]

For example, in February 2003, a large rally was organized in Washington, DC, to protest the pending US invasion of Iraq. Had those at the rally been imbued with a more militant revolutionary spirit, they might have realized that they had the numbers to storm and occupy Congress (similar to the January 6, 2021 riot) and in so doing possibly stop the war by force (potentially without firing a shot). Could such a tactic have been justified? Given the clear illegality of the Iraq invasion, as well as the destruction it brought to the Middle East region, the answer is clearly yes, even if some of those who occupied the congressional building ended up killed or injured. It is less obvious, however, that such an approach would have been effective in stopping the invasion.

Or, consider the example of Willem Van Spronsen's action against the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Washington, in July 2019.[98] In that case, Spronsen used incendiary devices in an attempt to destroy ICE vehicles (nobody was in the vehicles at the time). The cause appears to have been just: Spronsen was attempting to destroy part of an immigration system responsible for the separation of children from their families, the placement of children in concentration camps, the denial of asylum seeker rights (in violation of the Geneva Conventions, to which the USA itself is a signatory), ICE raids on migrant family homes, the deportation of refugees into life-threatening conditions, and more.

But how effective was Spronsen's act? On the one hand, Spronsen did do some damage to the vans and thus may have prevented the agency from harming some immigrant families, at least temporarily. Also, just based on social media commentary, Spronsen seems to have inspired other activists, although the breadth of such inspiration would be hard to measure. On the other hand, Spronsen was himself

[97] Similarly, Gordon (2008, p. 84) argues that a critical discussion of violence vs. non-violence in anarchist strategy "requires decisively separating two axes of discussion: violent/non-violent and justified/unjustified." Furthermore, Gordon observes that "a framework of justification necessarily depends on the success of violent actions" (p. 101).

[98] CrimethInc. (2019, July 13). *On Willem Van Spronsen's Action against the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma*. https://crimethinc.com/2019/07/14/on-willem-van-spronsens-action-against-the-northwest-detention-center-in-tacoma-including-the-full-text-of-his-final-statement

killed by ICE agents, rendering him unable to continue the struggle. Arguably, had he not given his life, the accumulated good of his latter actions would have been greater than that of his last action.

More generally, on the topic of effectiveness, libertarian communist Lusbert argues that an appropriate military strategy for achieving socialism should depend on the "correlation of forces" between capitalists and workers – that is, the balance of forces on both sides of the class struggle. When the correlation of forces favors the working class, direct confrontation against the bourgeoisie may be optimal. On the other hand, given a balanced correlation of forces, or one favoring the capitalists, other strategies such as enclosing or dividing the enemy may be more advantageous.[99] This balance will depend crucially on the stances of the military and security forces, the topic to which I turn next.

The Military and Revolutionary Change

In his book *Anarchy Alive!*, Uri Gordon (2008, p. 107) makes the plausible point that, given the state's monopoly on force, "a precondition for any revolutionary social transformation is that most members of the police and army forces *desert* or *defect*." Similarly, Graeber and Wengrow (2021, p. 364) observe that "Revolutions are rarely won in open combat. When revolutionaries win, it's usually because the bulk of those sent to crush them refuse to shoot, or just go home." For example, during the Egyptian revolution in 2011, "the close association drawn by protestors between their struggle and the military, as in the notion of the 'one hand' shared by the people and the army against the regime, pushed the military closer to the protests" (Lawson, 2019, p. 80). Military neutrality during the revolution (rather than taking the revolutionary side) might also help to prefigure civilian control of the armed forces, a key democratic characteristic.

According to Haggard and Kaufman (2016, p. 225), *praetorianism*, i.e., "the failure of democratic government to establish effective control over the military," increases the risk of an authoritarian counter-revolution. Variants of praetorianism include histories of military coups, social violence, the presence of militias and armed gangs, and weak central control over territory (ibid, p. 272). Two of these warning signs – social violence (e.g., the numerous mass shootings) and the presence of militias and armed gangs – are present in the USA today.[100] On the other hand, the USA does not have a history of military coups, which is promising. For instance, "in the post-Soviet countries, the fact that communist regimes had a long

[99] Lusbert. (2020, March 30). *Strategy and Tactics for a Revolutionary Anarchism*. Black Rose Federation. https://blackrosefed.org/strategy-tactics-revolutionary-anarchism/

[100] Many militia groups in the US appear to have something like a classical liberal worldview. If so, addressing some of the basic concerns of economic liberals (as this book has sought to do, especially in Chap. 3) and pursuing a nonpartisan approach could reduce the risk of reactionary violence from such groups.

history of military subordination to party control may have insulated them from coups" (ibid, p. 286).[101]

Avoiding a Care Gap During the Revolution

Can State and Municipal Services Be Relied on During the Revolution?

How can societies avoid a "care gap" (i.e., inadequate supply of public services) during a revolutionary upheaval? Meeting people's basic needs during a revolution can be achieved with state-based public services, non-state organizations, or some combination of the two. In the buildup to revolution, a key question for independent assemblies should be whether a transitionary state will be needed to maximize equal liberty after the revolution. If the answer is "no," the goal should be to abolish the state, in which case non-state (or post-state) services will need to meet people's needs during the revolution. If it is determined that a transitionary state is needed after the revolution, the option of relying on state or municipal services during the revolution remains available, raising another question: Can such services continue to function smoothly throughout a revolutionary transition?

Would revolutionary transformation, as I've described it, necessarily disrupt state or municipal public services? It seems plausible that, in the political realm, basic services could continue to function even while the political institutions are being transformed. In the economic realm, wealth redistribution might be achieved, for instance, through a steep progressive tax and the expropriation of certain industries. Arguably, such changes need not disrupt public services either. Nor is it obvious why transformative change in the cultural realm would necessarily disrupt the provision of basic services (indeed, it might enable them to be run more smoothly).

Continuous provision of public services would require that people who work within those sectors continue to do so throughout the transformation. If the revolution sparked a "great resignation" among public sector personnel, then such services might become unreliable. However, if the importance of the public sphere is emphasized as part of the revolutionary message (consistent with the libertarian social democracy argument), a revitalization of civic participation (including a desire to work in the public sector) might occur instead. But let us imagine a scenario where some important municipal or state services are temporarily disrupted. In that case, prefigured non-state organizations can help steer the outcome in a positive direction (Laursen, 2021, pp. 211–2).

[101] The risk of praetorianism in the US (evinced by mass shootings and armed militias) reinforces the argument that full decentralization as a revolutionary outcome could be premature. That is, trying to go straight to anarchy would heighten the risk of a coup unless the revolution was very well executed.

The Role of Non-state Organizations During a Social Revolution

In his book *Overcoming Capitalism*, Tom Wetzel (2022, p. 214) distinguishes between two types of non-state organizations that might meet people's basic needs during a revolutionary transformation. The first is *organizations of struggle* that "directly confront and push back against the power of the capitalists and the State – as in worker strikes, militant mass marches, rent strikes, and occupations." Such organizations include workers' councils, syndicalist unions, rank-and-file trade unions, and tenant unions. This category might also include neighborhood assemblies "where people in a working-class area have come together to define their own agenda, in opposition to elite interests" (pp. 219–20).

The second type is *organizations to manage a resource* (or "alternative institutions"). These include worker-owned businesses (cooperatives) and a variety of services (organized as cooperative, collective, or community-run) for child care, housing, education, energy, health clinics, as well as mutual aid and disaster relief. This category might also include redistributive solidarity economies, participatory budgeting initiatives, land trusts, and communal agriculture and food distribution systems (p. 219).

According to Wetzel (2022, p. 221), organizations for managing resources such as cooperatives will not, on their own, be sufficient to meet people's needs during a revolutionary moment. Rather, organizations of struggle are better suited to do so, as Wetzel explains: "Because the syndicalist strategy envisions workers taking over control of the various industries in a period of transition, syndicalism offers a much better guarantee of continued goods and services being provided to the working class in a period of disruptive social transition."

However, Wetzel continues, "organizations to self-manage resources can be useful to the movement for social change – organizations to run social centers, popular education centers, child-care cooperatives, democratic land trusts, and so on." For example, "In the Spanish revolution, the syndicalist unions in Barcelona and Valencia were layered on a wider set of social organizations – storefront worker schools, cultural centers, women's groups, neighborhood committees" (ibid, p. 221). Libertarian social democracy might also recognize a potential role for small businesses (including but not necessarily limited to cooperatives) in meeting people's needs during a revolutionary transition.

8.7 Hybrid Strategy (After Social Revolution)

This chapter has thus far focused on the advantages of revolutionary strategy over reformism, as well as revolutionary tactics, up to and including the social revolution. We can also think about strategy in the aftermath of a successful revolution. It is here argued that *after* a successful revolution, a gradualist (hybrid) approach in which sub-national governments, autonomous regions, and prefigurative organizations, supported by a revolutionary government at the national level (guided by the

libertarian social democratic vision described in Part I), would be more conducive to equal liberty maximization than a strictly bottom-up, prefigurative approach. That is, if the revolution succeeds in abolishing class, establishing an anarchistic culture, and ushering in a set of well-designed political institutions conducive to the elements of gradualist anarchism, a democratic transitionary state can arguably make a net contribution to equal liberty.[102]

Similarly, in their discussion of "twenty-first century socialism" in countries such as Venezuela, Raekstad and Gradin (2020, p. 127) observe that, "The existing state is to be used to defend the revolution from internal and external threats and to help support and grow the development of prefigurative institutions through things like legal recognition, protection, and financial support."[103] They also mention that "taking over the existing state can at best play one part in a larger constellation of strategies and tactics" (p. 155). In his case study of Savonlinna, Finland, Condit (2019, p. 36) also argues for a hybrid strategy at the municipal level, writing: "The municipality may not prefigure any kind of anarchist order. But it may tolerate, encourage and respond to capabilities and initiatives among citizens which do prefigure something, even if we cannot define it."

I agree with Condit that municipal participation can potentially "enlarge rather than diminish the experience of self-governance" (ibid, p. 189) and that, more generally, a hybrid strategy can expedite anarchist progress. However, that can only be true under optimal conditions in the political, economic, and cultural realms. Absent such conditions (as in the USA today), the opportunity cost of trying to consciously use states (or even municipalities, arguably) to promote anarchist progress

[102] Even before a successful social revolution, it is possible for states to work with or aid autonomous zones. For instance, the autonomous zone of Cherán, in the state of Michoacán, Mexico, relies in minor ways on the state. For example, "In the rare event of a serious incident, a decision may be made by the [Cherán] council to refer the matter to the Michoacán state prosecutor. To date, five homicide cases have been referred to the state." Also, Cherán receives social assistance funding from the state and federal governments (Campbell, 2020, p. 175). However, prior to a social revolution, modern democratic states tend to shun or undermine prefigurative experiments and/or autonomous zones. For example, in Britain, the post-World War II Labour Party government did not integrate the anarchistically managed Peckham Health Centre into the newly created NHS system, despite the government's pledge to devolve control over the NHS to the community level. Goodway, D. (2007, May 1). *Anarchism and the Welfare State: the Peckham Health Centre.* History & Policy. https://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/anarchism-and-the-welfare-state-the-peckham-health-centre

[103] In Chap. 1, I argued that adherence to political democracy separates anarchism from Marxism ontologically. Thus, whether the example of Venezuela (mentioned by Raekstad and Gradin) is consistent with anarchism (from the perspective of libertarian social democracy) depends on whether Venezuela is still considered a political democracy. According to Przeworski (2019, p. 26), "I look at classifications of Venezuela in several data sources, only to learn that no one agrees whether it is still a democracy and if not as of when." In Guriev and Treisman's (2022, p. 197) account, to cope with dwindling oil revenues, Nicolás Maduro "retreated from spin to a more traditional fear dictatorship." If so, Venezuela might be described as an example of Marxism, or perhaps an anarchist-Marxist hybrid (if the bottom-up and top-down elements are viewed separately, rather than as a single holistic system [see discussion in Chap. 1]).

outweighs that of a revolutionary strategy aiming to bring about those optimal conditions.

A useful metaphor for hybrid strategy is a pincer that bears down on inequality from the top (via reformism and law) and from the bottom (via prefigurative, revolutionary, and/or municipal-level efforts). Arguably, the pincer should bear down primarily on that level of government with sovereignty (today, the nation-state). That is, we should focus our revolutionary efforts on the national rather than the sub-national level. Of course, given the anarchic nature of world politics, the "upper pincer" (i.e., a supra-national government) is not able to coerce national governments today.[104]

However, if revolutionary efforts succeed in establishing an egalitarian democratic transitionary state at the national level, *that* "upper pincer" would then be available to bear down on sub-national governments, potentially expediting anarchist progress. As was discussed in Part I, the diffusion of self-government (political realm), the reliability and coverage of voluntary and informal public services (economic realm), and the commitment to equal liberty (cultural realm) will help determine if focusing our revolutionary efforts at a sub-national (rather than national) level would be optimal (i.e., equal liberty maximizing).

8.8 Conclusion

In the USA today, a constellation of factors sets the stage for a successful revolutionary moment: the timeliness of a new US Constitution, an extensive list of deeply rooted public policy problems, the two-party system's failure to adequately address the issues, popular support for transformative changes (such as a multi-party system),[105] as well as the broader crises in neoliberalism and liberal democracy (discussed in Chap. 1). Ansell and Torfing (2021, pp. 25–26) also highlight several contemporary "enablers" of transformative change, including a more knowledgeable, assertive, and politically confident citizenry, the growth and strengthening of civil society organizations in recent decades, and new digital technologies. As Micah White (2016, p. 37) observes, "The ingredients for global revolution are now here."

[104] A transnational or supranational entity could potentially be established with the ability to pressure even powerful national governments. Indeed, international laws and norms already achieve this to a limited extent. For example, Piketty (2020, pp. 914, 1026) envisions a new European Assembly with fiscal powers over the European nation-states as well as a wider transnational assembly to deliberate over issues pertaining to global shared goals such as climate, research, justice, and inequality reduction.

[105] While numerous polls have shown widespread support for major reforms, as of November 2021, only a small percentage of the American public preferred an entirely new US constitution. Bright Line Watch. (2021, November). *Tempered expectations and hardened divisions a year into the Biden presidency*. http://brightlinewatch.org/tempered-expectations-and-hardened-divisions-a-year-into-the-biden-presidency/

While the pieces do seem to fit, a collective action challenge lies ahead, as formidable as the revolution is timely. Robert Reich (2015) predicts optimistically that the major division in American politics in the years ahead will be an elite-mass divide rather than the conventional partisan divide. According to Reich, "It is impossible to predict how or when this might occur, but it is already possible to discern the bare beginnings of a movement," such as polls showing widespread antipathy towards Wall Street (p. 185). Similarly, Ronald Inglehart (2018, p. 211) writes: "The social base of the New Deal coalition and its European counterparts is gone, but the conflicting interests of the 99% and the dominant 1% have created the potential for a new coalition."

While the contemporary collection action problem is formidable, resolving today's political crises will first "require a clear-eyed recognition of the problem and the stakes" (Hacker & Pierson, 2020, p. 230). To that end, Part II of this book has offered some insights that might help build revolutionary momentum. Building on those insights, today's priorities include demonstrating the moral justification for revolution via a discussion of the current policy landscape and failures of the two-party system (Chap. 6); reviving an interest in equal liberty as a historical goal (the thymotic desire for recognition); building consensus on a basic set of revolutionary objectives in the political, economic, and cultural realms (Chap. 7); and demonstrating the futility of reformist strategy today while advancing an effective revolutionary approach (Chap. 8). As the revolutionary movement gains momentum, so too should the non-partisan division between those seeking fundamental change for the better and those striving to preserve the existing order become increasingly apparent.

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Conclusion

Transformative Changes Advanced

How can we advance freedom and equality in the context of the modern sovereign state? To address this question, this book has focused on two broad topics: anarchism (Part I) and social revolution (Part II). As was mentioned in the Preface, this book's central argument – libertarian social democracy – promotes transformative change in four respects. First, it advances a more comprehensive understanding of anarchism, which incorporates the full spectrum of anarchist strategy from prefigurative to gradualist. While many examples of gradualist anarchism can be found in the history of anarchist theory and praxis (reviewed in Chap. 2), this book is the first, to my knowledge, to present a comprehensive framework, which explicitly incorporates and reconciles prefiguration and gradualism. In so doing, this book provides an anarchist politics of the transitionary state, and addresses mainstream concerns about bad anarchy, thereby enhancing anarchism's potential popularity and rendering it more suitable as a new social paradigm.

Second, this book presents a rigorous argument in favor of social revolution in the United States, with potential relevance to other liberal democracies as well. As was argued in Part II, a successful social revolution will be needed to adequately address the problematic policy landscape in the United States (described in Chap. 6). Such a revolution also holds the potential to restore America's position as a source of inspiration in the international community, and a vanguard in the historical march toward freedom and equality. Furthermore, a well-executed social revolution within the United States could also create space for transformative change in other countries around the world.

Third, at the international level, this book advances a new social paradigm – libertarian social democracy – with a vision and level of ambition proportional to the urgencies and opportunity of the current historical moment. As was argued in Chap.

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1, paradigm-shifting ideas (beyond a mere revival of liberal values) are needed if the crises of neoliberalism and liberal democracy are to be overcome, and the current impasse in the historical progression toward equal liberty surpassed. In the process, such a paradigm shift could also spur a fourth wave of democratization in more authoritarian countries, and reverse the momentum of illiberal populism within liberal and illiberal democracies.

Finally, this book suggests a new interdisciplinarity between anarchism and comparative politics, which promises breakthroughs in both fields. On the one hand, libertarian social democracy offers a new normative sense of direction for political scientists beyond liberal democracy, imbuing the discipline with an updated and enhanced relevance to contemporary social affairs. On the other hand, a new openness to comparative politics would help relax the tendency among anarchists to downplay differences across political systems, enabling the more comprehensive understanding of anarchism mentioned above, and drawing attention to the key question: Which political institutions will be most conducive to anarchist progress?

Integrating Comparative Politics

The aspect of this book perhaps most vulnerable to critique is its reliance on normative rather than positivist argumentation. In Chap. 1, I mentioned John Clark's (2019, p. 138) admonition that, "[whether] a transitional state is in any particular case a revolutionary or counterrevolutionary force is a historical and empirical question, and cannot be an article of faith." My emphasis on the possibility of a post-revolution, egalitarian democratic transitionary state might be critiqued as such an "article of faith." On the other hand, this book has promoted drawing upon (or conducting) comparative research with an eye toward identifying which institutional designs are most conducive to the elements of gradualist anarchism: just law, consensus, and decentralization. In that sense, this book could be seen as echoing Clark's admonition.

While writing this book, I have encountered some basic perennial questions, such as: Which political institutions are most conducive to anarchist progress? Who determines whether a law or policy is just, ultimately? What is the proper balance between public and private economic spheres? What level of decentralization would maximize equal liberty? And more. This book has offered some suggestive arguments, for instance, regarding the optimal design of political institutions (Chap. 7). However, the intention of this book has not been to provide one-size-fits-all solutions to the social problems of today. Rather, I have sought to establish a general framework within which actors at different levels of governance can address these and other tough questions while on the path to equal liberty. Comparative research can help inform such decisions.

Toward a Comprehensive Anarchism

Recent developments in anarchist political philosophy have advanced a more nuanced understanding of anarchism according to which some engagements with state politics can potentially contribute to anarchist progress. These include Franks' (2020) argument that prefigurative actions might include some limited engagements with establishment politics, Raekstad and Gradin's (2020) observation that a revolutionary government can support prefigurative organizations and autonomous zones, and Condit's (2019) consideration of municipal governance as a potential contributor to prefigurative anarchist efforts. Also offering some nuance to the strict anti-statism principle, Gordon (2008, p. 155) writes:

> [A]narchists can recognize Palestinian statehood as the only viable way to alleviate their oppression in the short term. This amounts to a specific value judgement whereby anti-imperialist or even basic humanitarian concerns take precedence over an otherwise uncompromising anti-statism.

Generalizing the value judgment Gordon refers to, libertarian social democracy prescribes a more-or-less strict adherence to revolutionary strategy (limited to "outsider tactics" beyond state politics) in an unequal democracy, but a hybrid strategy (incorporating both prefigurative efforts and instrumental uses of a democratic transitionary state) after a successful social revolution. Thus, this book's argument is *less strict* than the aforementioned perspectives, recognizing not only some minor exceptions or nuance to prefigurative politics, but rather a potential role for the state on par with prefiguration in a more holistic anarchist framework. On the other hand, this book's argument is *even stricter* than the aforementioned arguments given its prohibition on instrumental uses of state power prior to a successful revolution, in an unequal democracy.

The Ontological Question

As was discussed in Chap. 1, the idea of gradualist anarchism (described in Part I) encounters what I have called anarchism's ontological question: Can anarchism incorporate instrumental uses of state power, or is this inherently contradictory to the idea of anarchism? To address this question, I have sought to clearly demarcate gradualist anarchism from political liberalism and Marxism (two ideologies that come closest to the libertarian social democracy perspective), following Graham's (2015, p. 3) precept:

> In order to determine whether someone's views, or a movement, can be described as 'anarchist', […o]ne must come up with some identifying or defining characteristics of anarchist doctrines and movements that distinguish them from other ideas and movements.

Anarchism has traditionally met this standard elegantly via its adherence to prefigurative principle. I have argued that gradualist anarchism can be clearly

distinguished – albeit via a less succinct two-step demarcation – from both liberalism and Marxism. This two-step demarcation is necessary, because gradualist anarchism (itself part of the broader libertarian social democracy framework) shares liberalism's commitment to political democracy, and Marxism's idea of a transitionary state. Thus, it was argued in the Introduction that gradualist anarchism can be distinguished from Marxism via the former's consistent adherence to democratic political procedures, and from liberalism via the former's emphasis on progressive decentralization. I argued in the Introduction that these are differences in kind not degree.

On that point, one might counter-argue that this book's perspective is different in degree, and not kind, from liberal political ideas (broadly defined) such as European subsidiarity or, say, the "segmental autonomy" (federalism) of Arend Lijphart's consociational democracy vision. Indeed, it would undermine my assertion that libertarian social democracy is an anarchist argument if one could show that the idea of progressive decentralization (including the full withering away of the state) can be found in the broader liberal-republican tradition. I have thus far seen no clear evidence of that, and much to the contrary (see Chap. 1).

For instance, while Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel (and more recently Rawls) advanced the idea that freedom involves abiding by just laws we give to ourselves (what I have called *self-government*), they did not also, to my knowledge, advance a vision of progressive decentralization (what I have called *autonomy*). Lijphart viewed full partition as a potential way to minimize conflict in deeply divided societies (see Andeweg, 2000, p. 512). However, Lijphart's perspective (like the argument for devolution) does not entertain, to my knowledge, the potential for a full withering away of the state. From the perspective of political liberalism, national sovereignty remains a necessary evil, though potentially located at more local levels than the currently existing nation states.

Bringing Social Revolution Back In

In Chap. 8, it was argued that revolutionary strategy is superior to reformism in an unequal democracy, in terms of both utility maximization (or "harm reduction") and equal liberty promotion. However, following a successful revolution, the elements of gradualist anarchism can provide guideposts for social progress: building consensus on just law, and then decentralizing power to that level of government, which maximizes equal liberty (i.e., commensurate with the level of self-governance achieved and sustained). As was explained in Chap. 2, the longer-term goal of libertarian social democracy is to approximate an anarchist *summum bonum* wherein each individual is both self-governing and autonomous – the fullest realization of equal liberty (i.e., anarchy).

Advancing equal liberty beyond liberal democracy and neoliberalism must begin with a successful social revolution within the United States. While the current situation within the United States seems conducive to successful revolutionary change,

achieving such an outcome requires overcoming a formidable collective action challenge. As was mentioned in Chap. 8, having a clearly articulated framework for social revolution (as well as a comprehensive vision of social life after such a change) can help facilitate coordination among well-intentioned actors who recognize the need for transformative change, in the United States and internationally. With this book, I have sought to provide such a framework.

Another World Is Probable

As was discussed in Chap. 1, in his book *The End of History and the Last Man*, Francis Fukuyama (1992) presented a Universal History of mankind, building on Plato's tripartite theory of the soul, and Hegel's argument that the struggle for recognition can only be resolved by achieving reciprocal recognition among equals. Building on those perspectives, Fukuyama argued that "the recognition provided by the contemporary liberal democratic state adequately satisfies the human desire for recognition" (p. 207). History might continue to prove Fukuyama correct. However, I have argued that the remaining shortcoming in equal liberty associated with liberal democracy creates a potential contradiction capable of propelling mankind into a new stage of history, guided by libertarian social democracy. From that perspective, the spread of liberal democracy is but one goal along a longer historical trajectory involving the establishment of just law, consensus building, and then decentralization, eventually approximating an anarchist *summum bonum* wherein each individual is self-governing and autonomous. However, the realization of this outcome relies on our desire as free individuals to continue seeking mutual recognition.

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